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GRANT RICHARDS, LONDON

# GREAT ENGLISH NOVELISTS

BY

HOLBROOK JACKSON

AUTHOR OF "BERNARD SHAW : A MONOGRAPH"  
"WILLIAM MORRIS : SOCIALIST—CRAFTSMAN"

WITH THIRTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON  
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## NOTE

*IT is the aim of the series of books, of which the present volume is number three, to supply concise biographical estimates of the lives and accomplishments of various eminent people. And, bearing this in mind, I have endeavoured to make the following essays upon certain of our great novelists, not so much critical studies as familiar interpretations, introductions, as it were, to the master-workers in what is now one of the greatest and, without doubt, the most popular of literary forms. My desire has been to show the relationship between the novelist's life and his art, and, without going exhaustively into the details of his individual novels, to indicate their main tendency and the underlying idea of his complete work. For the artist, whatever art he practise, whether it be literature, music, painting, sculpture or other art, is first of all a human being with a point of view, and the quality and accident of this point of view determine the complexion of all his work. Unless this*

*attitude towards life is realised, a proper comprehension of his work is impossible. I have aimed, therefore, at arriving at this central view and of interpreting it, not, as I say, by a detailed description of individual novels, but by an exposition of the representative work of each novelist. By such a process, I trust, my essays have escaped the danger of being overloaded with detail, and that I have opened the way for that most desirable consummation of all books, the intelligent and happy collaboration of author and reader.*

*Besides this, I have tried, as far as is possible without destroying their independence, to link each essay together in an informal and unobtrusive way, so that the writers dealt with shall appear in their correct perspective as a series of events in the history of the novel. The book may therefore stand, in a secondary sense, as an introduction to the study of the English novel, from the period in which it first attained a separate consciousness in Defoe, to the present day, in which it has become a highly complex and exacting art. And, although the conditions of the present series have necessitated the omission of several novelists, I have tried to preserve a clear view of the broad evolutionary path of the novel.*



*My object has not been to deal with every great novelist, and, within my space, I have chosen only those who have contributed something essential towards making the English novel what it is.*

*I should like to have included Oliver Goldsmith for the sake of the "Vicar of Wakefield," the delicate comedy of which is among the great achievements in narrative fiction. But in this I have been forestalled by Mr. Julian Hill, who has already dealt with Goldsmith in the present series, in his volume on "Great English Poets." Then, again, there has been a continual temptation to follow many of the byways leading off the broad path and bearing such eminent names as Marryat, Thomas Love Peacock, George Borrow, Wilkie Collins, Samuel Butler, but splendid as is the work of these writers, the great tradition of the novel has actually depended on none of them. Charles Reade also was crowded out by Scott and Bulwer. I fully recognise "The Cloister and the Hearth" as one of the finest of historical novels, and in this bare admission make what amends I can. With Anthony Trollope the case is different, and his omission is less defensible because he was crowded out by my own prejudices. Finally it must not be imagined that the absence of women novelists is due to any lack of*

*appreciation on my part. On the contrary, I should like to have included Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot in my hierarchy—but the women novelists are to have a volume to themselves.*

*In the essays which follow, I may therefore claim that some idea of the novel and its place in literature and society is revealed. Nowadays it is not necessary to apologise for one's appreciation of this art, any more than it is necessary for one to prevaricate about one's visits to the theatre. Both the novel and the theatre are now recognised as important accessories of our social being. The novel indeed, as I have tried to show, is one of the most vital means of social expression. No other art has such means at its disposal for a complete interpretation of all those phases of human life which we call civilised, and it has grown both in itself and in popularity along with the development of civilisation and culture. In its highest form the novel is the most perfect medium for the distribution of social ideas.*

*From the essay on Henry Fielding it will be seen that the early novels received considerable impetus from the vigorous censorship of plays. But useful as this accident was, it was no more than an accident. Narrative fiction had already taken the novel form*

*in the biographical fictions of Defoe and in the story-telling letters of Samuel Richardson. Indeed, the novel, like every other art, was not the outcome of an accident, but of a deep human need; and accident or no accident, it would still have come into existence. Human beings have ever been curious as to each other's doings, and with the growing privacy of social life which followed the break-up of the feudal system, with all its possibilities of intercourse by means of pastoral, round-table stories, and pageantry, some other means of communalising social curiosity had to be found. People lived more in their separate houses and more and more got into the habit of taking their art by proxy. On the break-up of feudalism all forms of public expression fell into the hands of specialists. People ceased to tell each other stories, they read stories written for them by others; the folk no longer took part in pastoral plays or religious festivals, they went to theatres; and although the gentle art of personal gossip has never become quite extinct, letter-writing and colloquy have been largely supplemented by the printing press, in that form of social and domestic news inaugurated by Steele, Addison, and Defoe in their now classical periodicals. The novel proper is really a combination of these three*

*means of social communication: the story, the play, and that form of intercourse usually carried on by epistles. But in its present form it is more allied to the theatre, indeed, it has been called the pocket theatre, and I know of no more descriptive title than this. But to the revelation of conflict in drama by dialogue, scenery, and mimicry, the novel has added a fuller sense of growth, which can only be suggested by the most artificial means on the stage. The people in a novel can grow up, whereas on the stage they must remain at one age, or at least, in the more urgent cases, get older, by a series of jumps between the acts. The novel has the advantage over drama in this respect because it has added description to discussion and contest. It is thus a more comprehensive representation of society and more adaptable to the prevailing love of private life, taking, as it were, the theatre into the home.*

HOLBROOK JACKSON

Mill Hill, N.W.

September, 1908.

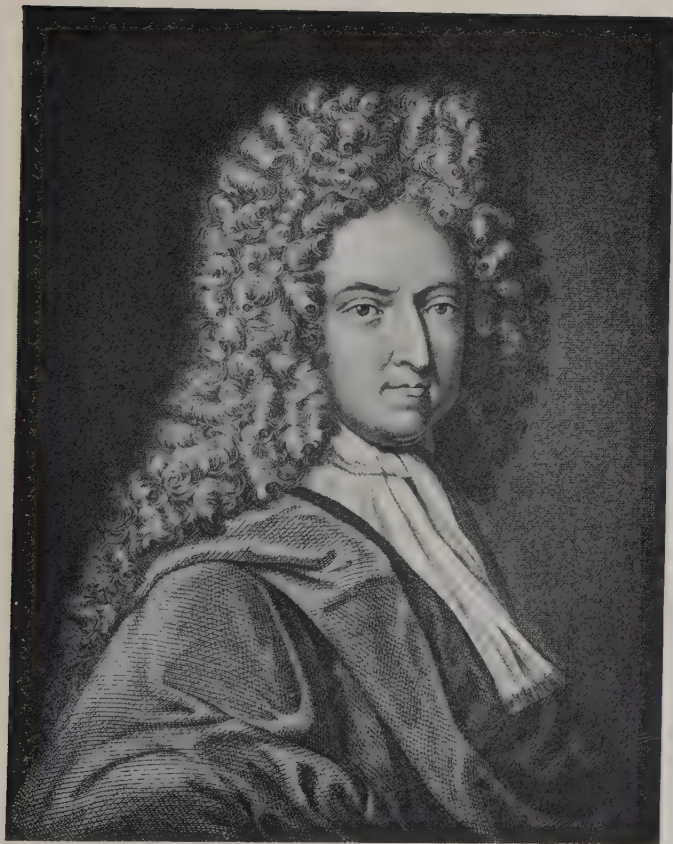
## DANIEL DEFOE

DANIEL DEFOE has been called the first English novelist, but this can be accepted only in a very qualified sense. He was more in the nature of a bridge between two literary eras : between the era which based its narrative fiction upon historical legend and that which gained inspiration and material from the social affairs of its own time. The old romance, born away back in the Middle Ages and cradled through centuries of simple faith and stirring action, was dead. It had survived almost down to the time of Defoe, but its simple joy in the colour and movement of life had latterly given place to a dandified love of phrase. It no longer delighted in the story but in the manner in which the story was told ; so that what was once a direct and beautiful narration of human experience became a gorgeous arrangement of exquisite phrases.



With the upheaval of society caused by the Revolution and the establishment of a Puritan Commonwealth, came a newer way of looking upon life, and literature took to itself new manners. The florid narratives of the Euphuists had no attraction for the stern followers of Oliver Cromwell, and in their place, as well as in the place of the more irresponsible play of the period, a new literature began to take form. The religion of the day was a matter-of-fact and practical thing. The Puritans lived to purpose. And anything that did not contribute in some way to their purpose was decried. Imagination for its own sake was looked upon as evil. A story, unless it had a definite moral aim, was looked upon with suspicion; just as the theatre was considered the abode of sin. This attitude towards art was so deep-rooted that it changed the whole tendency of literature, and its echoes are heard even down to our own day in the exclamations of those good people who still look upon novels and theatres as lures of the Evil One.

It must not be supposed, however, that the outcome of this rigid Puritanism was entirely



DEFOE

*After a print by M. Vandergucht*



without good results. In the first place, by discountenancing any art but that which contributed in some perceptible way to the moral life of the time, it cleared the field of that dense mass of frivolous and pedantic matter which had for many years impeded the growth of healthy literature. And, in the second place, by insisting upon a correspondence between the written word and actuality, it restored men's minds to a sense of fact: it made them turn from the vision of the wonders beyond the day to look with a clear eye upon the happenings of the moment. Daniel Defoe was the man of letters who was able to take full advantage of the new view of life thus created. He came upon the scene when the Puritan spell had been broken and a lively reaction had set in, and, with almost superhuman energy, and no scholastic or sectarian encumbrances, as well as a wonderful sense of contemporary life, he took the first step towards a sane, secular, and popular English literature.

Daniel Defoe was born in the year of the Cavalier Parliament, 1661. He was the son of James Foe, a citizen and butcher of London, residing in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate,

a locality intimately associated with the early life of John Milton. The family hailed from Northamptonshire and was of yeoman origin. Very little is known of the inner events of his life, and what is known is so inextricably woven into the texture of his imaginative work that it makes very indifferent biographical material. Defoe, the father of realistic fiction, has himself become almost as legendary as his own Robinson Crusoe, and not half so convincing. During his long and energetic life he had so many occasions to explain himself and his actions that he has explained himself out of all recognition, until no one can now say where the real Defoe begins and the legendary one ends. Even his name is not his own, his father's name being Foe, and up till the age of forty the son called himself Daniel Foe, when, presumably for reasons of authorship, he changed it for the rendering now accepted in literature.

His father was a Dissenter and a staunch upholder of the ideals of the Commonwealth. He was a member of the congregation of the famous Nonconformist divine, Dr. Annesley, and the young Daniel was originally intended for the

dissenting ministry. To this end he was sent, at the age of fourteen, to Mr. Morton's Academy in Newington Green, remaining there some five years. It is not known what progress Defoe made at the Academy, but it may be assumed that here he laid the foundations of that full store of knowledge upon which he drew with never-ending energy until his death. One thing, however, is worth noting in reference to the education of this destined writer of vigorous and popular English. It was a part of Mr. Morton's system that all dissertations should be written and all disputations held in the English tongue, and thus it may be granted Defoe first learnt how to use the national language in the direct and trenchant manner in which he afterwards became a master. The fact that he did not receive the classical education which was then considered so necessary to a scholar and a gentleman was often in after years used as a gibe against him, and this, man of the people though he was, he bitterly resented, and he would stop in his busy career to challenge those who thus attacked him and to defend his own learned standing. On one occasion he replied to Swift,

who had referred to him as "an illiterate fellow," that "he had been in his time pretty well master of five languages, and had not lost them yet, though he wrote no bill at his door, nor set Latin quotations on the front of the *Review*."

His father's wish that he should become a minister was not fulfilled. In after years Defoe explained why he did not proceed with the career that had been designed for him. The ministry, he considered, was no longer an honourable calling, neither—and this probably would have made a more moving appeal to one who never despised pecuniary advantages—did he look upon it as any longer a profitable profession. So he abandoned learning and divinity for commerce and was apprenticed to a hose-factor in the City. In 1685 we hear of him starting business as a hosier on his own account in Freeman's Court, Cornhill; but the progress of this enterprise is largely lost in the myth of his life. He himself on being taunted with having been a hosier's apprentice denied the charge, saying also that although he had been a trader he had never been a shopkeeper.

He must, however, have had some considerable



experience of trade as is indicated in his essay on the *Complete English Tradesman* ; but although he was able to give most excellent advice to would-be traders, it would seem, as is not seldom the case, that he was not qualified to turn this advice to his own advantage. The more or less legendary hosiery business must have been somewhat extensive, for there is some indication of its having taken him as far away as Spain on one occasion. But his first trading experiences had ill results, whatever his calling may have been, for in 1692 he had to flee from his creditors. He attributes his failure to having been swindled, and whatever truth there is in that statement, there is no doubt that years afterwards he honourably met all his financial obligations.

After the failure of his business the £17,000 liabilities hanging over him necessitated some discretion in his future movements, and there is some ground for belief that he retired for a while to Bristol, where he was known as the Sunday Gentleman, because he appeared only on that day, attired fashionably, keeping his house for the rest of the week for fear of bailiffs. He received several business offers, which would

indicate that he had some repute as a business-man despite his failure ; one of them gave him an opportunity of becoming a commission agent at Cadiz. But he elected to remain in England. Some two years later he went into business as a brick and tile manufacturer at Tilbury, where he employed over a hundred workmen. This adventure proved more successful, so much so that in 1705 he was able to boast that he had reduced the liabilities of his first enterprise from £17,000 to £5,000.

Throughout this business period Defoe was laying the foundations of his destined career. He had already become a keen controversialist at Mr. Morton's Academy, and, so early as 1683, he was writing from the popular standpoint on questions of the hour. The Academy must have been a nursing ground for militant Dissenters, and it was there, we may imagine, that his taste for popular disputation was first stimulated. Countenance is lent to this belief in the fact that he with several of his fellow-students took part in the Duke of Monmouth's rising. During the disturbed reign of James II Defoe began his career as a pamphleteer. He wrote vigorously

and indomitably in prose and verse in favour of the Protestant cause, and his political activities no doubt contributed to the downfall of his first business enterprise.

In the revolt of 1688, which resulted in placing William of Orange on the throne, he first gained publicity as an adherent of the new monarch, and it is recorded that he was one of "a royal regiment of volunteer horse, made up of the chief citizens, who, being gallantly mounted and richly accoutred, were led by the Earl of Monmouth, now Earl of Peterborough, and attended their Majesties from Whitehall" to the City banquet given by the Lord Mayor. It is not, however, until 1691 that a pamphlet by him can be authenticated with any certainty. His first known work was published in that year, on the occasion of the Jacobite plot in which Lord Preston was a leader ; it is in verse, and entitled, *A New Discovery of an Old Intrigue: a Satire levelled at Treachery and Ambition.*

Defoe must have been in financial straits at this time, but his keen intellect and ready flow of ideas were soon recognised by eminent persons, for we find his advice in proposing ways and

means to the Government for raising money being solicited; and on the publication of a loyal pamphlet in support of the war against France, he was rewarded with an appointment as accountant to the Commissioners of the Glass Duty, a post he held until the duty was abolished in 1699. His first notable service to the King was a pamphlet in defence of a standing army, which reform was eventually obtained, and from this Defoe's fame grew by leaps and bounds. Ideas of reform were in the air and, with an aptitude amounting to genius, he turned them into the endless current of his dialectic. His *Essay on Projects* is a masterpiece both as an example of vigorous prose and as an expression of the social ideas of the time. Besides this, it shows how much the political zeal of that period anticipated much of the practical politics of the future, such as the construction of highways, protection of seamen, education of women, and the establishment of savings banks and benefit societies, to say nothing of the wider ideas of liberty involved in Free Trade and freedom of individual conscience.

It was during the fierce controversy occasioned

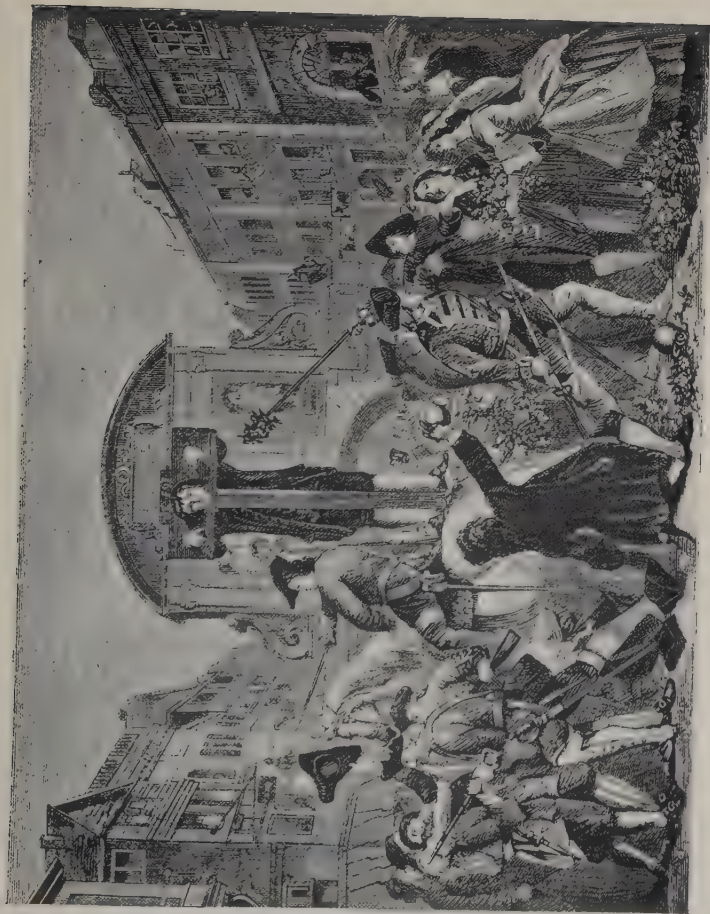
by the High Church reaction that Defoe gained his fullest measure of fame. This came about through his famous denunciation of the practice by Dissenters of "occasional conformity" for the sake of office or other privilege. The pamphlet was called *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, and it was issued in 1702. It was couched in strong High Church terms, advocating in vehement partisan language the severest possible measures for suppressing Nonconformists. Defoe's intention was probably ironical; he imagined that by this method of stating the reactionary case in frank and even exaggerated language he would alienate all fair-minded people from the High Church side. His effort, however, failed, and he succeeded only in alienating both parties from himself. Proceedings were instituted against him. *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* was burnt by the public hangman on 25th February, 1703, and Defoe was found guilty of seditious libel, and sentenced to pay a fine of 200 marks, stand three times in the pillory, be imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure, and find sureties for his good behaviour for seven years.

An incident in this eventful period of his life gives us the only written glimpse of his personal appearance. A proclamation for his arrest was issued, and as the pamphleteer had gone into hiding, the following description of him was added :—

He is a middle-aged, spare man, about forty years old, of a brown complexion, and dark-brown coloured hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes, and a large mole near his mouth: was born in London, and for many years was a hose factor in Freeman's Yard in Cornhill, and now is the owner of the brick and pantile works near Tilbury Fort in Essex.

Defoe's appearance in the pillory in July, 1703, before the Royal Exchange, near the Conduit in Cheapside, and at Temple Bar, was the occasion of a great popular demonstration in his favour. He was remembered as the author of the *True-Born Englishman* and other hits at the authorities in defence of the people's rights. And instead of the contempt and ill-usage often so pitilessly accorded victims of the pillory, the place of punishment was surrounded by dancing and cheering admirers, who drank





DEFOE IN THE PILLORY AT TEMPLE BAR  
*After a painting by Eyre Crowe*





wine and ale in his honour and scattered flowers about him. His enforced penance became a triumph. He was the man of the hour, and his popularity increased tenfold when he issued a *Hymn to the Pillory*, in which he denounced those who had inflicted this penalty upon him, suggesting the type of people for which the pillory ought to be used—fraudulent stock-jobbers, profligates, fanatical Jacobites, and the commanders who had recently brought the English fleet into disgrace.

His experiences in Newgate “during the Queen’s pleasure” were on the whole pleasant, for he could continue his writing; indeed, it was during his imprisonment that he started the most important of all his political works, the *Review*; and he had that opportunity of making friends with criminals and hearing their stories, thus gathering valuable material for the last phase of his life-work, in which he produced those fictions which have given him immortality. There were some domestic disabilities, however, the greatest of which was the failure of his pantile works at Tilbury and the consequent monetary stress thrown upon his wife and six

children. He lay in Newgate, however, until towards the end of 1704, when, following the growing Whig tendencies at Court and the fall of the High Church party, he was released.

Up to this point the record of Defoe's public activities is fairly straightforward, but, beginning with his release from Newgate, a change seems to have come over his methods. There is much evidence to prove that his actual release was brought about by some understanding with the Government, into whose service he went. At the same time he professed to serve the Opposition, and he led the people to believe him still under the ban of the authorities as to freedom of speech. It is also more than probable that he was on several occasions engaged as a spy. At the same time Defoe did not let these charges against his honour go undefended. He did not claim adhesion to any party, but, on the contrary, protested against his reputed love of parties: "I have served," he said, "with my utmost zeal, the great and original interests of this nation, and of all nations—I mean truth and liberty—and whoever are of that party, I desire to be with them."

Whilst in Newgate Defoe must have become conscious of his talent for what we now call journalism. He had always been a journalist, in fact, the pamphleteer was the forerunner of the journalist. But when he issued the *Review* he inaugurated the political press and practically became the inventor of the journalism which is the chief mode of intellectual intercourse of the present day. Defoe had the journalist's way of looking at things, and it is more than probable that his changes of front no less than his advocacy of great causes, such as the Union of Scotland and England (in the bringing about of which he had no small share), were nothing but the efforts of an astute newspaper proprietor after the largest circulation. The *Review* itself was an amazing production, written as it was entirely by himself, and anticipating as it did so many of the now established features of the press. Three at least of these features, the leading article, society news, and special correspondence, can be directly attributed to his inventiveness.

But a still more important thing than this came out of his journalism, for it was through his zeal as a publicist that he became a novelist—

just as another branch of the novelist's art was descended from the journalism of the *Spectator* and *Tatler* of Steele and Addison. Most of the original matter eventually worked up into narrative fiction is to be found in the files of the various journals he either owned or edited. The business of the journalist is to make facts interesting, and when the events of the day do not yield workable matter, the trick of the trade is to invent. Defoe's inventiveness was without end, and his skill in ferreting out likely matter and writing it up for his papers has never been surpassed. Without scruple and without fear, he took a delight in playing with dangerous subjects as a boy will play with explosives. He exploited the governments of his day and the notabilities, he took up and expounded familiar topics such as apparitions and popular horrors, and detailed in realistic, personal, and intimate terms the lives of criminals.

Finding the public liked such things, he sought to give them more enduring form, and so came into existence, almost by accident, that series of prose narratives which heralded the birth of realistic narrative fiction in English letters, and

culminated in the greatest boy's book in the world, *Robinson Crusoe*. There is strange irony in the fact that of all the immense labour of Defoe's life, of all his colossal productiveness (for he wrote over two hundred separate works), those destined to immortality were the results of an almost flippant and quite cynical desire of gain. The novels of Defoe supplied a popular demand—and became immortal.

In 1715 Defoe retired from the turmoil of political controversy and went with his family to Stoke Newington, where he had built himself a house, and there he produced that series of novels upon which, to all but the historian, his fame will rest. *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719, and in quick succession his tireless and fertile pen followed the immense and immediate success of this famous volume with *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Moll Flanders* (1721), *Colonel Jack* (1722), *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), *Memoirs of a Cavalier* (1723), *Roxana* (1724), *New Voyage Round the World* (1725), *The Life of Captain Carleton* (1728), and minor works of the same order.

Defoe has been called the inventor of realistic

fiction, and although this is true, it is not true in the light of what is now understood to be realism in fiction. It would be better to describe him as the creator of the imaginative biography or history. But even this would not entirely define the peculiar qualities of his fiction, for although on the whole his narratives are imaginary, they are always based upon fact, indeed, they are in a very real sense a record and extension of actual fact, but rarely beyond the bounds of possibility and never beyond those of plausibility. Defoe is the most plausible writer in the world. You always believe him, and this sweet reasonableness is the key to all the triumphs and failures of his whole career.

*Robinson Crusoe*, the greatest of his works, is both his most imaginative and his most plausible narrative. The original of the hero is Alexander Selkirk, who was marooned on the island of Juan Fernandez in the West Indies, from 1704 to 1709, and Defoe had probably read Captain Cook's account of this incident in the great navigator's *A Voyage to the South Seas and Round the World* (1712). From the bare record in





ROBINSON CRUSOE

*From the frontispiece to the First Edition*



this volume he made his masterpiece of ingenuity, reflection, and adventure. And in much the same way did he extend and elaborate the facts which went to the making of his other tales. This is really where he came into touch with the traditions of the commonwealth ; he looked upon the world through keen observant eyes and recorded what he observed with honesty of purpose and simplicity of language, so that all, without distinction or favour, might read ; furthermore, he never forgot to draw his moral lesson or reflection from the incidents of his stories. The verisimilitude of his narratives was a part of the same tradition, for it was considered frivolous to read works of mere invention. Defoe, therefore, to safeguard the acceptance of his invention had to further invent its resemblance to actual record ; and this he did so well in some cases as to genuinely deceive his readers, just as he bewildered the disputants over *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, which in form was no less a piece of fiction than *Robinson Crusoe* or *The Journal of the Plague Year*.

Defoe was a mixture of artist and controversialist, but his art was almost unconscious.

He wrote because he could not help it. Literary expression with him was a pressing need. When he supplied some popular want he was most an artist, but when he deliberately attempted to repeat a success he failed. Instances of this are seen in the additional parts to *Robinson Crusoe*, which possess none of the magic of the original section, and in all the narratives which follow his great masterpiece. Each of these possesses fine qualities, but none the full certainty of execution of *Crusoe*. It was in keeping with his life and methods that he should afterwards declare *Robinson Crusoe* to be an allegory of his own career. And whether this were his original intention or an afterthought there is actually a strong resemblance between the careers of the two men. Defoe displays in many ways the same fortitude, assiduity, and inventiveness of *Crusoe*, and the storm-tossed life of the one might well symbolise the argumentative and combative life of the other.

But the end of Defoe was not so comfortable as that of his great hero. There is no doubt that he lived prosperously at Stoke Newington, but towards the end he must again have lapsed

into financial difficulties, for after his death, which occurred on April 26th, 1731, at a lodging in Ropemaker's Alley, Moorfields, his personal belongings were seized by one Mary Brooks, a widow, who was presumably his landlady. There is, however, some doubt as to his actual condition at this time, and it may be that after all Daniel Defoe spent the last few months of his life in peace and comfort. There is a mystery, however, shrouding these last months. He was at Stoke Newington in 1729 writing *The Complete English Gentleman*, some of the parts of which were already in type, when for some inexplicable reason he ceased work and fled. Why he did so is unknown. Some correspondence disputing the marriage portion of one of his daughters with his future son-in-law indicates that he was in hiding "near Greenwich." But why he was in hiding or what strange fate befell the aged writer is not revealed.

So mysteriously ended a life of wondrous activity. Rarely has a man contrived so much in the brief span of mortal years, and still more rarely has a man fought and worked so well until death actually put an end to his labours.

Defoe was vainglorious and ambitious, life to him was a great battle and the one desirable thing the honours and rewards of victory. He gained some of these whilst he lived, but in death he has achieved even more, for his best work survives him and his age. *Robinson Crusoe* is a shrine holding the eternal youthfulness of Defoe and destined to live so long as youthfulness exists in the world.

## SAMUEL RICHARDSON

THE novel has always been essentially a domestic form of literature. It sprang not out of the strife of life, but out of its peace. And above all, and in spite of the fact that it has been from time to time condemned by seriously minded people, it has been the chief means of bringing a literary interpretation of manners and customs to the knowledge of the average person; in fact, the novel along with the newspaper and magazine has become the most democratic of all modes of expression. It was the outcome of tendencies in social life which had little to do with, and in many cases were the direct opposites of, accepted scholastic traditions. The two earliest pioneers of the novel were, as Swift dubbed Defoe, illiterate fellows. They were men who had practically educated themselves and expressed themselves in their own way.



Defoe, as we have seen in the foregoing essay, derived his art from popular journalism, but he never arrived at a full conception of the actual form the typical novel would take. His was a masculine genius and his leanings were all towards what was vigorous and active and strange. His narratives, in spite of their biographical and intimate studies of persons, were in the main romantic tales. The first piece of fiction on the lines of the typical novel did not appear for nearly ten years after his death. Its name was *Pamela*, and it was written by a London printer named Samuel Richardson, who thus became the father of the modern analytical novel. And it must be noted that just as Defoe's narratives were derived from journalism, so the novels of Richardson, if not so obviously derived from the same source, were in a very real way an adaptation in the form of consecutive narrative of the epistolary essays of the *Spectator* and *Tatler*.

Samuel Richardson was born in Derbyshire in the year 1689. His father was a cabinet maker and a native of Surrey. Samuel Richardson the elder was a man of parts, for, as well as

being a cabinet maker, or joiner, as such craftsmen were then called, he had some ability as an architect and at one time was "a considerable importer of mahogany in Aldersgate Street." His ability and intelligence won him many favours from people in high places, and among them was the Duke of Monmouth who apparently paid the joiner more than ordinary attention, for when that nobleman fell under the merciless political wheels of the time, the elder Richardson to his own material detriment had to fly from Surrey and take refuge in remote Derbyshire, in what part is not known.

Samuel was one of nine children, three of whom were born during this exile in the Midlands. He was in London with his family during boyhood; the termination of the Revolution presumably having made a settlement in the south fairly safe. Like Defoe, he was destined by his father for the ministry, but owing to financial losses in business this idea was not carried out and the boy was sent to one of the schools in connection with Christ's Hospital to be instructed in the mental equipment necessary for a business career. Nothing

is known of his schooldays save some slight reminiscences of his own in which he records his early leanings towards literary invention.

“I recollect,” he says,

that I was early noted for having invention. I was not fond of play, as other boys; my school-fellows used to call me *Serious* and *Gravity*; and five of them particularly delighted to single me out, either for a walk, or at their fathers' houses, or at mine, to tell them stories, as they phrased it. Some I told them, from my reading, as true; others from my head, as mere invention; of which they would be most fond, and often were affected by them. One of them particularly, I remember, was for putting me to write a history, as he called it, on the model of *Tommy Pots*; I now forget what it was, only that it was of a servant-man preferred by a fine young lady (for his goodness) to a lord, who was a libertine.

And he concludes with the characteristic reflection that,

All my stories carried with them, I am bold to say, an useful moral.

Another early characteristic was his predilection for letter-writing. This art, which he afterwards turned to such excellent account in his novels, developed in his schooldays, and became the domi-

nant habit of his life ; in fact, the whole of his literary output and, indeed, the whole expression of his life was in the form of epistles. As a boy he wrote them with delightful, if irritating, precocity, to improve the morals and minds of his elders. In youth and early manhood he became professional scribe to friends and acquaintances ; his first book was an extension of this friendly office to the general public. His novels were epistolary narratives, and from the time of his first fame as a writer until his death, his life was controlled by an unending interchange of letters between himself and his admirers—he giving them interminable screeds of reflection and advice, they feeding his imagination with trite ideas and his inordinate conceit with fulsome praise. This phenomenal letter-writing was a very real thing to Richardson, and after a certain time he kept all the letters he received and copies of those he wrote. Among his personal effects at his death were six huge folio volumes containing some eight hundred and fifty letters and transcripts of letters covering the period between the year 1735 and 1761. These volumes were later acquired by John Forster,

the biographer of Charles Dickens, who bequeathed them with his library to the South Kensington Museum, where they may be seen by the studious and the curious.

Samuel Richardson had three main characteristics which went to his making as a novelist, and these features were practically his from youth upwards. He acquired few characteristics in after years that were not a part of his nature and habits throughout his life. He is almost a complete example of subjective development. Of the three main features of the novelist of after years, two, his story-telling gift and his epistolary habit, have been named. The third was his natural fondness of the society of women and the readiness with which they on their part responded to one who understood them with such sympathetic intuition. At the tender age of thirteen he so won the confidence of his women acquaintances that he became the writer of their love letters, and whilst still a boy he was in great demand by the mothers and daughters of his locality for reading aloud whilst they pursued their needlecraft.

At the age of sixteen his father required him

to choose a business for himself, and, on the supposition that it would give him ample opportunity to follow his natural taste for reading, he chose that of a printer. In 1706 he was apprenticed to the printing trade in the house of Mr. John Wild, of Stationers' Hall and Aldersgate Street. He was a conscientious youth and found little time for the literary relaxation he desired, and unlike most young writers he had scruples which would not permit him to steal his master's time. Nevertheless he managed in what spare hours he secured to gain some considerable knowledge of the inside of books.

In 1719 he began as a printer on his own account in one of the numerous courts off Fleet Street ; and two years later, at the age of thirty, he married at the Charterhouse Chapel, Martha, the daughter of his old employer, John Wild. There were six children of this marriage, all of whom died, save one who only reached the age of four years. Samuel Richardson and his wife lived for a while in Fleet Street, and in 1724, owing to the growth of the printing business, they moved to a larger house which is described as being "in the centre" of

Salisbury Square, or Salisbury Court as it was then called. It was in connection with his business as a printer that he gained his first experience in actual literary work in the compilation of indexes and dedicatory epistles to volumes he was printing for the booksellers. And in 1723 he did some journalistic work for the Duke of Wharton's political paper *The True Briton*, which was shortly afterwards indicted for libel.

On the 25th January, 1731, Martha Richardson died, and the following year Richardson married Elizabeth Leake who was a sister of James Leake, the bookseller of Bath, afterwards one of the publishers of his volume of *Familiar Letters*. By his second wife he had several daughters, and one son who, however, did not survive his first year. Richardson has the reputation of having been an affectionate father and husband, though preoccupation with business and afterwards novel-writing, not to mention a frail body and indifferent health, made him somewhat of a stranger even in his own family. His business continued to prosper; he was by this time a printer of some repute, and he eventually became a master of the Stationers' Company. He



secured the printing of the Journals of the House of Commons through a friendship that existed between him and Arthur Onslow, the Speaker of the House. And from 1736 to 1737 he was the printer of the *Daily Journal*, and in the following year of the *Daily Gazetteer*. Further evidences of business success exist in the fact that he had a country house in addition to his premises in Salisbury Square, and in 1739 he took a house called "The Grange" in North End Road, Fulham, which remained his home for fifteen years. This house still exists and was for over thirty years the home of the painter, Sir Edward Burne-Jones. It was here that he wrote most of his novels and here he received and entertained those numerous admirers of his books, minor poets and essayists, ladies with literary tastes, including two sisters of Fielding, one of whom wrote the novel *David Simple*, and all those adoring sentimentalists who clustered about the high priest of that delicate art. There was a seat in the garden with an ink-horn on one of its arms where the novelist would sit in creative mood or in amiable state. The extent to which the adoration of his admirers was carried may be imagined from the story of a

Mr. Erasmus Reich, of Leipzig, who is reputed to have embraced the seat in his enthusiasm and to have boasted that he "kissed the ink-horn on the side of it."

But these enthusiasts were no encumbrance to Richardson. Indeed, they fed his imagination no less than encouraged him in his work. His correspondence with them must have aided him in becoming a master of that art which Mr. E. V. Lucas has called the Gentlest Art—the art of letter-writing. Day by day he would discuss the plots of his novels with his lady friends. Those amazing dissections of feminine emotions and sentiments of his must have gained considerably from this first-hand criticism and sympathy, and there is a pleasant picture of the novelist in the early days of his authorship sitting at evening in the little office-study at Salisbury Square, reading the day's crop of *Pamela* to such enthralled intimates as his wife and a lady friend.

"Unless a man has written a notable book by the age of twenty-five, he will never write one." So runs the sweeping adage. If this really be so, Samuel Richardson must be a notable exception

to the rule, for he wrote no book until he was just double that age. His first written, though not his first published volume, was made to the order of the booksellers. It was no pot-boiler, however, but a book after the author's own moral heart and in strict keeping with his epistolary genius. It was a volume of model letters for all times and purposes and embellished with moral reflections on the proper conduct of life. This was published in January, 1741, two months after the issue of *Pamela*, his first novel. The long and elaborate title of the volume fully describes its scope and purpose :

*Letters written to and for particular Friends, on the most important Occasions. Directing not only the requisite Style and Forms to be observed in writing FAMILIAR LETTERS ; but how to think and act justly and prudently, in the common Concerns of Human Life.*

Richardson rightly set little value upon this first attempt. He knew, limited as his powers in self-criticism were, that the *Familiar Letters* was but the prentice work of one who was barely "out of his time" as a student and interpreter of the human heart. But this book was the almost

accidental "first cause" of the first novel, the latter actually appeared before the *Familiar Letters* were published. It was during the writing of this volume that Richardson conceived the idea of *Pamela*. Certain of the letters naturally turned upon affairs of the heart, and in writing two or three "to instruct handsome girls, who were obliged to go out to service, as we phrase it, how to avoid the snares that might be laid against their virtue," he recollected a story which he had heard many years before, and without any immediate consciousness of what he was doing, the letters formed themselves round the old story—and *Pamela*, the first modern novel, was the result.

Although Richardson was not conscious of the fact that he was inaugurating a new literary form, in writing *Pamela* he realised that he was compiling something different to the fiction of his day. His habit of mind was passionless, methodical, and naturally calculating, and he looked with reserved impatience upon the passionate follies and activities of men. *Pamela* was to be a corrective of this sort of thing. It was to be an exemplary tale, a moral

lesson for a world over-prone to follow its instincts rather than the dictates of reason and virtue.

“I thought the story,” he wrote to his friend Aaron Hill,

if written in an easy and natural manner, suitably to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and dismissing the improbable and marvellous, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue.

*Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded* was issued in two volumes in 1740, and two more sequel volumes were published in the following year. The story is the simple tale of a beautiful girl, the child of respectable parents in reduced circumstances, who, because of this, has to enter the service of a wealthy lady. Her charm of manner and beauty of person engage the attention of her lady's son, “a young gentleman of free principles,” who attempts “by all manner of temptations” to seduce the girl. She resists his advances with such firmness and dignity that the wild youth is subdued, and eventually makes her his wife.

Such is the trite story of *Pamela*, but, as Dr. Johnson says,

If you read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story only as giving occasion to the sentiment.

*Pamela* is Richardson's briefest tale, and yet as a tale his manner of telling it is all too long. The incidents of life itself are more rapid than the incidents of such stories. But the immediate and unique success of *Pamela*, although born in a more leisurely age than ours, could not have been due to a story so simple, so old, and so long-drawn-out. Neither was the great interest in the contest of *Pamela* and her lover due to the moral fervour of the novelist. It was due, as Dr. Johnson discovered, to a new and fascinating manner of interpreting sentiment. Richardson's novel made the human heart speak aloud that which hitherto it had only told itself—and all the world stopped to listen.

*Pamela* became the fashion. "*Pamela* is like snow," wrote young Horace Walpole; "she covers everything with her whiteness." Fine

ladies carried the volumes about with them and gentlemen sat up all night to read them. Rich and poor, high and low, everybody read and talked *Pamela*. It was recommended from the pulpit ; Pope said it “ would do more good than many volumes of sermons ” ; some discoursed upon its high moral importance and looked forward to a renaissance of virtue ; others doubted the wisdom of its minute interpretation and frank uncloaking of the most intimate sentiments of life. It was parodied, pirated, and translated ; glorified and denounced ; it moved Fielding to attack its morbid analysis and, incidentally, to extend the scope of the novel in the more robust pages of *Joseph Andrews*. And, finally the villagers of Slough, after hearing it read to them by the local blacksmith, were so overjoyed at the triumph of the virtuous heroine that they insisted on going out and ringing the bells of the parish church !

The enthusiasm cooled somewhat when, in the next year, Richardson issued two more volumes of *Pamela*. He was a “ moralist first and novelist afterwards,” as Mr. Austin Dobson has observed, and thus he did not realise that



interest in Pamela ended with her marriage : "That's all de fur de story goes," Uncle Remus would have said. The sequel is nothing more than a series of endless dissertations upon morals and virtue, and the failure of public interest in these two extra volumes amply proves that moral enthusiasm was hardly the basis of the popularity of the original volumes.

Richardson, however, was now famous. When he went down to Bath or Tunbridge Wells he was the observed of all observers. But all this publicity increased his habitual timidity and shyness, and gratifying to his personal vanity though it must have been, he would fain have shrunk out of the public gaze. His timidity was not entirely temperamental, but due largely to his constant ill-health. He was by this a confirmed valetudinarian, following a diet and keeping close watch upon his habits. Bad health came as naturally to him as good health does to the normal person. And it can be well imagined that had it been otherwise his inner conceit, which was so wrought up with jealousy of Fielding, his great rival, would have forced him to peacock himself with the intellectual dandies.

Of his personal appearance at about this time we have his own pen-portrait, a carefully and humorously detailed little cinematograph, made for Lady Bradshaigh, one of his most ardent worshippers :—

Short ; rather plump than emaciated, notwithstanding his complaints ; about five feet five inches ; fair wig ; lightish cloth coat, all black besides ; one hand generally in his bosom, the other a cane in it, which he leans upon under the skirts of his coat usually, that it may imperceptibly serve him as a support when attacked by sudden tremors or startings, and dizziness which too frequently attack him, but, thank God, not so often as formerly ; looking directly foreright, as passers-by would imagine, but observing all that stirs on either hand of him without moving his short neck ; hardly ever turning back ; of a light brown complexion ; teeth not yet failing him ; smoothish-faced and ruddy-cheeked ; sometimes looking to be about sixty-five, at other times much younger ; a regular even pace, stealing away ground, rather than seeming to rid it ; a grey eye, too often overclouded by mistinesses from the head ; by chance lively, very lively it will be, if he have hope of seeing a lady whom he loves and honours ; his eyes always on the ladies ; if they have very large hoops he looks down and supercilious, and as if he would be thought wise, but perhaps the sillier for that ; as he approaches a lady his eye is never fixed first upon her face, but upon her feet, and

thence he raises it up, pretty quickly for a dull eye ; and one would think (if we thought him at all worthy of observation) that from her air and (the last beheld) her face, he sets her down in his mind as *so* and *so*, and then passes on to the next object he meets.

The public eagerly awaited his next work, and in 1747 and 1748 he issued the seven volumes of what proved to be his masterpiece—*Clarissa : or, The History of a Young Lady*. This great book set the cap on Richardson's fame and even wrung appreciative words from Henry Fielding. It is again a story of the heart with a beautiful woman, Miss Clarissa Harlowe, as its central figure ; and again the story is both simple and direct. Clarissa is a child of fortune who is unfortunate enough to attract the attentions of Robert Lovelace, a gay young libertine who was introduced into her parents' house as the suitor of her sister. Her family are against this transference of affection on the part of Lovelace and introduce Roger Solmes, a less attractive and more contemptible reprobate than the former, as a suitor for the heroine. Clarissa does not admire the character of Lovelace, but to escape from Solmes she allows herself to accept his pro-

tection, and in a moment of terrified decision elopes with him. Lovelace refuses to marry her and ultimately betrays her while she is under the influence of drugs. Clarissa has many bitter and degrading experiences afterwards and finally dies broken-hearted, but happy in the consciousness that she is "unviolated in her will." Lovelace is eventually killed in a duel with her cousin and guardian, Colonel Morden.

Long as the story is in the telling it is more compact and more inevitable than *Pamela*. There is a deeper insight into character and a fuller mastery of language. The close analysis of sentiment is in turns, in spite of its diffuseness and slow to weariness of movement, witty and pathetic in expression, and shrewd in its revelation of the inner workings of the more obvious emotions. Richardson stands revealed in this work as one of the greatest delineators of feminine temperament. *Clarissa* is a book that few modern readers would attempt to read from cover to cover, but it is at the same time one that will have a lasting fascination for all who love to browse over long meadows of graceful prose, culling here and there the posies that spring with

surprising frequency in their way. Indeed, it is the length of the book alone that prevents it having a wide popularity at the present day. "I suppose you have never read that *aggravating* Book *Clarissa Harlowe*?" Edward Fitzgerald asked a friend in one of his letters. "Now, with a pair of Scissors, I *could* make that a readable Book; and being a perfectly *original Work of Genius*, I should like to do that Service to my Country before I die."

Robert Louis Stevenson is among the many who have sung the praises of *Clarissa*, but unlike Fitzgerald he is content with it as it is. It is "one of the rarest and certainly one of the best of books," and "written, sir, with the pen of an angel." Indeed, enormous and prairie-like as are its meadows of prose, one could not say just exactly where it could be "cut." *Clarissa* is an organic book, a work of art in which every detail is worked with structural certainty into the whole. The sheer structure of the book alone, with its exquisite and leisurely handling of the numerous characters, each revealing his or her nature as it comes in contact with the central theme, is an artistic accomplishment of the first

order, comparable to nothing else in English literature save Robert Browning's *Ring and the Book*.

Richardson in these two novels had excelled himself as an analyst of the feminine nature ; he had shown that he could more than any other writer reveal the inner workings of a woman's heart under the trials and restraints of rigid conventions. But he had not been convincing as the delineator of masculine types and his admirers clamoured for an effort in this direction. You have given us a "good" woman, now give us a "good" man, they said. The novelist's moral ambitions were once more aroused and he went forth to create a "good" man. And in five years he returned with *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, in seven volumes.

Sir Charles Grandison is made to pattern. He is the ideal good and honourable gentleman. In the slight story he is one of the six suitors of the beautiful Miss Harriet Byron, who has been the victim of an abduction at the hands of another of the disconsolate ones. Sir Charles has just returned from a prolonged visit to the Continent when, happening to be on Hounslow

Heath one night, he hears the cries of a lady in distress and discovers Sir Hargrave flying to his country house at Windsor after an abortive attempt to marry Miss Byron and with that lady a prisoner in his chariot. Sir Charles Grandison plays Knight Errant to the unfortunate lady and, rescuing her from the wicked Sir Hargrave, places her in his own equipage, drives over to his brother-in-law's house and, placing her in charge of his sister, communicates immediately with her friends. Sir Hargrave demands satisfaction in the usual way of the period, but Sir Charles' principles do not allow him to duel; and in the elaborate argument which follows Sir Hargrave is won over by the courage and magnanimity of Grandison. He eventually waits upon Miss Byron, to entreat her forgiveness, which she grants. Then the rescued lady falls desperately in love with Sir Charles, but honour comes in the way of reciprocity, for Grandison, when in Italy, had rescued the Signorina Clementina della Poretta from assassination, and after overcoming many scruples Sir Charles had made an engagement with that lady; but on his going to Italy to take his bride, Clementina has



an attack of religious conscience and refuses to marry a heretic, she of course being a Catholic. Sir Charles is now free to pay his addresses to Miss Byron, and after a six weeks' engagement he marries her.

The story of Sir Charles Grandison is trivial in the extreme, so much so that considerations as to its probability or otherwise are out of the question. The theme is simply thrown together as a background to show the fine feathers of the perfect gentleman. Richardson had used his old formula, but this time he had failed. When his moral enthusiasm prompted him to create a picture of a woman he was always saved from making a dummy by his full knowledge of the sex: knowledge born of an unconscious insight into their ways and prolonged and sympathetic observation of their habits. This gave him a store of vital knowledge which was capable of instilling the veriest counterfeit of a woman with something like vitality. As, for instance, Pamela and Clarissa, who in spite of their conventional harness are vivid and real. But neither by sympathy nor experience had he such knowledge of men, with the result that Sir

Charles Grandison is a simulacrum rather than a man, a bundle of moral precepts rather than a vital and moving work of art.

Richardson had shown what he could do in *Clarissa*. He knew women thoroughly, but men he only knew at second hand, through women. His novels are the expression of a thoroughly civilised view of life, for just as he only knew men by a kind of reflection, so he only knew life as reflected through the refined manners of society. His range is more limited than that of any other of the old novelists, but it gains in a certain depth what it loses in breadth. But this depth also is limited. Compared with the deeps of great passionate art, like the Greek Drama, the novels of Meredith, or the poetry of Keats, it is very shallow. Richardson works in a different medium. Passion is altogether out of his sphere. His medium is sentiment, the rippling and many-coloured surface of passion, and in his revelation of this his microscopic and analytical genius is supreme. "It is in working within limits that the master is revealed," says Goethe, and in working within the limits of sentiment Samuel Richardson became a master.

He was sixty-five years old when he published *Sir Charles Grandison*, and the years were beginning to weigh heavily upon him. He was prosperous in business and in letters, with many friends and admirers. His daughters were grown up and getting married, and he now allowed himself some relaxation from business, spending most of his time at his new house in Parson's Green, whither he had moved from Fulham in 1754. He had taken a nephew, William Richardson, into his business, and to him he left the management of the concern. Up to the end of his life he kept up his lifelong habit of letter-writing, and only gave it up when he was overcome by paralysis in his last days. He died of an attack of apoplexy on the 4th July, 1761, at Parson's Green, and was buried in St. Bride's Church, near the resting-place of his great predecessor in the craft of printing, Wynkyn de Worde.

## HENRY FIELDING

SIR WALTER SCOTT called Fielding "the Father of the English Novel," and in a special way this is true. Nevertheless it would be difficult to imagine the novels of Fielding if they had not followed the pioneer work of Samuel Richardson. If the author of *Tom Jones* is the father of the novel, the author of *Clarissa* is its grandfather. The work of Fielding as a novelist was in the first instance a protest and a satire upon the sentimentalism and moral morbidity of Richardson's novels. In fact, Fielding stumbled upon a new literary form whilst taking up a reproving attitude towards a form that already existed, just as Richardson before him had done. *Joseph Andrews* began as a burlesque of *Pamela* and ended as a new type of novel; *Pamela* began as a virtuous and exemplary protest against the frivolous and monstrous romances of the day and ended in the

same way. The differences between Fielding and Richardson are purely differences of treatment, each fathered a type of novel which, with modifications and amplifications, has survived down to to-day.

Henry Fielding was born at Sharpham Park, near Glastonbury, Somerset, on the 22nd of April, 1707, when Samuel Richardson would have been some eighteen years of age; but unlike his immediate predecessor in the art of the novel, he came of an ancient and noble stock, the Fieldings being a younger branch of the Denbigh family. Edmund Fielding, the father of the novelist, was directly descended from Sir William Fielding, a staunch Royalist, who had been created Earl of Denbigh, and who died fighting for King Charles. His son George was raised to the peerage and became Viscount Callan with succession to the earldom of Desmond. The Earl of Desmond's son, John, who became canon of Salisbury and chaplain to William III, was the father of Edmund Fielding. Edmund was, like the majority of his male forbears, a soldier. He fought with some distinction under Marlborough. At the age of thirty he

married Sarah, the daughter of Sir Henry Gould, Kt., of Sharpham Park, and a judge of the King's Bench. Fielding, it is interesting to note, was also related, by the marriage of a niece of Dr. John Fielding with the first Duke of Kingston, to the famous Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who was thus his second cousin. He lost his mother when he was barely eleven years old, and after some private tuition under a more or less mythical person named Oliver, he went to Eton, where he was a contemporary of William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, Henry Fox, and Lord Holland, and probably of Dr. Arne, the musical composer, and Gilbert West, the translator of Pindar.

Surprisingly few are the details of his life, particularly when it is remembered that for the greater part of his career he was always more or less in the public eye as playwright, theatre-owner, barrister, journalist, pamphleteer, and novelist. So far as any record of his personal life goes, he might have been an ordinary private person, a professional man, with no special claim on the public notice. We know, for instance, little or nothing of his later education. Part of

this was probably received at Leyden, but at what date is unknown. Before leaving England, however, the young Fielding commenced that deeper education in the affairs of the heart by laying siege to the affections of a fair lady at Lyme Regis, who is reputed to have been his cousin. His attentions were not encouraged by the lady's guardians, but the pertinacious lover was not to be frustrated, and to prevent an elopement the lady was removed to another part of the country, where she was put out of harm's way by being speedily married to the son of a gentleman of Oxford. This adventure served Fielding in after years as material for his novels, and at the time it drew from him, what is probably his first literary effort, an imitation in burlesque of part of the sixth satire of Juvenal. It is probable that this early effort was made at Leyden ; but he did not remain there long, for supplies from home failing, he returned to London in 1728 and entered the Law.

This move was taken at the instigation of his father, who had married a second time, and whose never extensive means necessitated the children of his first marriage finding some means



of supporting themselves. But Henry was in no great hurry to gain eminence in his profession, and he was not called to the Bar until ten years afterwards, during which time he had followed the dramatic art and become famous as a writer and producer of comedies, burlesques, and farces, some of which had received more than ordinary success.

Fielding was a diligent, enterprising, and attractive dramatic author, and for a short time, in 1736, he was the proprietor of the French theatre in the Haymarket, where, with his company of players, called, after one of the nicknames of Colley Cibber, "The Great Mogul's Company of Comedians," he produced *Pasquin, a Dramatic Satire on the Times*, which precipitated the passing of Lord Chesterfield's Bill for the licensing of plays in 1737. His first play, *Love in Several Masques*, was produced at Drury Lane in February, 1728 ; but he did not definitely look upon himself as a dramatic author until 1730, when his second play, *The Temple Beau*, was produced by Giffard at the theatre in Goodman's Fields. Then for some years he produced over his own name, or that of his pseudonym, Scrib-

lerus Secundus, a series of lively farces and burlesques in quick succession, including *The Author's Farce*; *The Coffee-House Politician*; *Tom Thumb*; *The Modern Husband*; *The Mock Doctor*; *The Miser*; *The Intriguing Chambermaid*; *Don Quixote in England*; *Pasquin*; *The Historical Register*; *The Wedding Day*; and *The Virgin Unmasked*.

The plays of Henry Fielding rarely rise to the serious and enduring point of dramatic art. They were written for the moment to criticise some topical foible or personality, or, as was often the case, to replenish the slender purse of their author; for at this time Fielding led the varied and irresponsible life of the prodigals of his period. Drinking and gaming with the liveliest, and often, after a night's carouse, scribbling his plays, so the legend runs, on the scraps of paper which had done service as wrappings for the tobacco he loved. He himself has admitted the wildness of his youth, which, in his own words, "pretended to very little virtue more than general Philanthropy and Private Friendship."

There is a Swift-like bite in the satire of his burlesques, and he even overstepped the frank-

ness of his own day in his reflections upon the eminent persons and common failings that came under his censure. His comedies had a seventeenth-century flavour, and were obviously modelled upon the unblushing works of Congreve and Wycherley, whose point of view he deliberately adopted in his novels, which, after all, contain the real and lasting embodiment of his comic spirit. It was in the burlesques and farces that he was modern to his day. These in many ways, although naturally warped by the personal and political prejudices of the moment, are a vivid picture of the manners and customs of the first half of the eighteenth century. Fielding, however, did not pretend to any originality in his work, and, like Shakespeare, he did not stop at borrowing from whatever source attracted his attention. Molière paid tribute in this manner, and Fielding's version of *L'Avare* gained from Voltaire the opinion that he had added to the original.

It was his satire upon the notabilities of the day that forced him to give up drama, and in the freedom thus gained he found time to burlesque *Pamela*, the incident thus turning the

dramatist into a novelist. His burlesque *Pasquin* had been produced in 1736, and its bold criticism had stung the Ministry, and this, following many recent suppressions of scurrilous and obscene plays, had given an impetus to the movement which had been on foot for some time, to promote a Bill as an amendment to the Vagrant Act of the reign of Queen Anne, limiting the number of theatres and compelling all dramatic authors to obtain a licence from the Lord Chamberlain. The Bill was passed by the Lords and received the royal assent on the 21st of June, 1737. And with the passing of this Act not only was the dramatic career of Fielding closed, but the gag then placed upon the theatre, which has never been removed, gave the art of the novel its chance, for just as it made a novelist of Fielding, so it limited the field of playgoers and made a bid to make novel-readers of us all.

Fielding now turned his attention to the legal profession. He became a diligent student of the Middle Temple, and was called to the Bar on the 20th June, 1740. In 1735, however, he had married, though little is known of the circumstances attending this event. There is con-

siderable doubt both as to the date of his wedding and even as to the maiden name of his wife.

There is an unreliable account of his having married a Salisbury beauty named Miss Cradock, who had a small fortune of fifteen hundred pounds, and of his retiring to Stower with his wife, "on whom he doted, with a resolution to bid adieu to all the follies and intemperances to which he had addicted himself in the career of a town-life." But his old lavish ways and his family pride got the better of him, and he immediately commenced to vie in splendour with the country squires. He kept open house and a retinue of servants in costly livery. He hunted, and gave entertainments and seems to have awakened the countryside to so great a mirth that the expenditure soon devoured his own small patrimony as well as his wife's fortune and eventually drove him back to London, where presumably he took to play-writing again with redoubled vigour to restore his fallen fortunes. But this story must be taken with a grain of salt, for the original chronicler, Arthur Murphy, so filled his account with details whose faultiness could be proved that it may be granted that the

remainder of his account as given above is largely fiction.

During the time he was a law student after the close of his dramatic period, he had a short experience of journalism, and for something over a year he controlled the *Champion*, one of the numerous papers founded on the model of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. His contributions were chiefly topical, and he found an opportunity of continuing in its pages an old feud which existed between him and Colley Cibber. He wrote satirical verses and essays, and although there is a consistent absence of magic about all his contributions, here and there his articles flash a lively wit or reveal in strong Hogarth-like strokes the personalities of his day. He renounced journalism for a time on being "called," and with the exception of the time devoted to his novels, applied himself consistently to the law. But throughout his life as a dramatist, as a law-student, and as a justice, he kept "throwing off," as it were, essays, pamphlets, and poems on all manner of topics, and these with several of his plays were republished afterwards in three volumes called *Miscellanies* (1743). Between 1745

and 1747 he was again engaged in journalism in connection with the political papers, the *True Patriot* and the *Jacobite's Journal*.

It was in the pages of the *Champion* that Fielding's great ironical biography, the *History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, appeared. This profound work, compounded of fact and fiction, satire and philosophy, is based upon the true story of the famous highwayman who was hanged at Tyburn in 1725, a record of whose deeds is to be found in Johnson's *Lives of Highwaymen* (1734). Fielding is careful to explain the meaning and purpose of this book, which was not written to amuse or to gratify idle curiosity. His aim was to show that the qualities which may make a villain eminent in crime are precisely the same as those qualities which go to the making of any form of greatness that is not allied to goodness. And the whole volume is a prolonged irony, couched in the clearest and most compact intellectual expression ever attempted by Fielding, upon the eminence of what he calls "Bombast greatness" — the spurious greatness which so often gets enthroned whilst the genuine thing may be languishing, not merely



in humble places, but in prisons and other places of crime. *Jonathan Wild* resembles nothing in its own time so much as the work of Swift, and in many ways it anticipates the attitudes of such moderns as Henrik Ibsen and Friedrich Nietzsche.

But the accounts of his domestic life during these years are not at all in keeping with what few facts we have. His close connection with the Law and his appointment as a Justice of the Peace for Westminster in December, 1748, are not consistent with the numerous contemporary, or a little later than contemporaneous accounts of his impoverished condition. But there is little doubt that he went through some hard times. There is a passage in the *Introductory Anecdotes*, contributed by Lady Louisa Stuart in 1837 to Lord Wharncliffe's edition of the *Letters and Works* of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, based upon the recollections of Lady Bute, Lady Mary's daughter, which gives a glimpse of Fielding and his struggles during the life of his first wife. Lady Stuart says :—

He loved her passionately, and she returned his affection ; yet led no happy life, for they were almost always miserably poor, and seldom in a state of quiet

and safety. All the world knows what was his imprudence; if ever he possessed a score of pounds, nothing could keep him from lavishing it idly, or make him think of to-morrow. Sometimes they were living in decent lodgings with tolerable comfort; sometimes in a wretched garret without necessaries; not to speak of the sponging-houses and hiding-places where he was occasionally to be found. His elastic gaiety of spirit carried him through it all; but, meanwhile, care and anxiety were preying upon her more delicate mind, and undermining her constitution. She gradually declined, caught a fever, and died in his arms.

Little is known of his children by his first wife; he speaks of a son and daughter, but what became of them history does not say. In 1747 he married the serving-maid of his late wife, an excellent woman who had had his confidence for some time and proved herself worthy to become a second mother to his children. At about this time he was living in two rooms in a quaint wooden house in Back Lane, Twickenham, and here was born his son William, who in after years became a magistrate of Westminster. In the following year the tide of fortune must have turned, for after his appointment to a magistracy he went to live in Bow Street, Covent Garden,

where he was known as a lavish and hospitable host and where he wrote his greatest work, *Tom Jones*.

He lived at Bow Street with his wife and family until ill-health forced him to retire from his position as a justice and remove to Ealing, and in a very little while afterwards to that sea voyage which proved the last event in his life. In spite of the rumours of debauchery even at this stage of his career when his health was fast breaking up, there is abundance of evidence to prove that he led the life of a worthy citizen and a wise judge. He was one of the earliest investigators into the conditions of the poor, and his essay, *A Proposal for the making an Effectual Provision for the Poor*, received much attention at the time, and some of his legal dissertations are considered masterpieces even at the present day. Furthermore, it was his devotion to the administration of the law at a time when London was overrun with thieves and murderers that went far to the complete wrecking of his already broken health. In spite of his illness, which had now become a serious complication of dropsy and asthma, he succeeded in ridding London of an epidemic of crime and vice, and his *Charge to the*

*Grand Jury* on luxury, drunkenness, and gaming is one of the gravest and most eloquent arguments in the language.

He now began to devote some effort to restoring his lost health ; he visited various spas and consulted numerous physicians, quack and otherwise. He appeared to gain some little relief from the then popular fad of tar-water, but this was only temporary. As a last move a warmer climate was sought. On the 1st of July, 1754, Fielding, with his wife and daughter, left the Thames, in the trading vessel *Queen of Portugal*, for Lisbon, and after many delays, as recorded in his last work, the pathetic and memorable *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, the party arrived in the sunny capital of Portugal. But the stricken novelist was too reduced in health to give any hope for his recovery, and two months after his landing, on the 8th of October, 1754, he died. He was buried in the English cemetery facing the noble Basilica of the Estrella, where travellers, as George Borrow said years afterwards in *The Bible in Spain*,

if they be of England, may well be excused if they kiss the cold tomb, as I did, of the author of *Amelia*, the most singular genius which their island ever produced.

Fielding wrote three novels, *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Tom Jones* (1749), and *Amelia* (1751). *Joseph Andrews*, we have seen, starts as a burlesque of *Pamela*, but after the eleventh chapter Fielding seems to forget this trivial aim and gradually to take a creator's delight in the figments of his imagination. He is a far greater enemy to the shallow sentiment of Richardson when he forgets *Pamela* and starts his own robust series of laughable and lovable human beings. At chapter eleven *Joseph Andrews* ceases not only to be a satire upon another novel, a book distilled from a book, as Walt Whitman would have called it, it ceases even to be *Joseph Andrews* and becomes a reality, an interpretation not of sentiments, nor of literature, but of life—it becomes, for all modern readers at least, the story of Parson Adams, one of the most delightful and inimitable characters in fiction. Fielding further displays in this book that hatred of shams which marks the tone of all his novels, and above all that large tolerance of human nature whose inexplicable lapses from rectitude under the light of his generous philosophy assume balance and even utility in the making of a man.

In the same way Fielding drew in *Amelia* a lovable and convincing picture of a good woman, a woman who is not merely a collection of precepts, but a being acting from her own generous impulses. *Amelia* was lovingly drawn from the life of his first wife, the woman who stood by him throughout his strenuous and troubled prime. This work has not the buoyancy of his two earlier novels, its movement is graver and it has too many digressions against the "law's delays." Yet as in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, the character drawing of the numerous people of the story, the dexterous handling of the plot, and the full virile English in which the novel is written leave *Amelia* one of the greatest and most masterly of novels.

We have to turn, nevertheless, to *Tom Jones* for the full fruits of Fielding's genius. This great epic of human nature and the laughing nonchalance of robust and generous youth, stands in the front rank of English novels. It marks at once the turning-point in the art of the novel, and its mastery. Fielding, in *Tom Jones*, asserted the eternal and unconquerable wisdom of nature

against the narrowing and timid limitations of sentimentality and the precepts of a nervous and effeminate civilisation. It is the epic of generous impulse. The realisation in narrative fiction of Emerson's mystic epigram that "the unconsciousness of man is the consciousness of God."

The Provision which we have here made, then, [he says, in the first of those delightful philosophic preludes to the various books of the novel] which we have here made, is no other than HUMAN NATURE. Nor do I fear that my sensible Reader, though most luxurious in his Taste, will start, cavil, or be offended, because I have named but one Article. The Tortoise, as the Alderman of *Bristol*, well learned in eating, knows by much Experience, besides the delicious *Calibash* and *Calipee*, contains many different kinds of Food; nor can the learned Reader be ignorant, that in *Human Nature*, tho' here collected under one general Name, is such prodigious Variety, that a cook will have sooner gone through all the several species of animal and vegetable Food in the World, than an Author will be able to exhaust so extensive a Subject.

An Objection may perhaps be apprehended from the more delicate, that this Dish is too common and vulgar; for what else is the Subject of all the Romances, Novels, Plays, and Poems, with which the Stalls abound? Many exquisite Viands might be



rejected by the Epicure, if it was a sufficient Cause for his contemning of them as common and vulgar, that something was to be found in the most poultry Alleys under the same Name. In reality, true Nature is as difficult to be met with in Authors, as the *Bayonne* Ham or *Bologna* Sausage is to be found in the Shops.

But the whole, to continue the same Metaphor, consists in the Cookery of the Author; for as Mr. *Pope* tells us,

True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest,  
What oft' was thought, but ne'er so well exprest.

Henry Fielding knew from himself the wisdom of this whimsical dissertation. He possessed in his own person all those excellences and errors which in the total of life go towards the making of a man fit for human nature's daily food. The very insistence with which Nature asserts herself through irregularities in social manners was significant to him, and he saw a rough wisdom in the fact that those who were not always the most punctilious of men were often the most lovable.

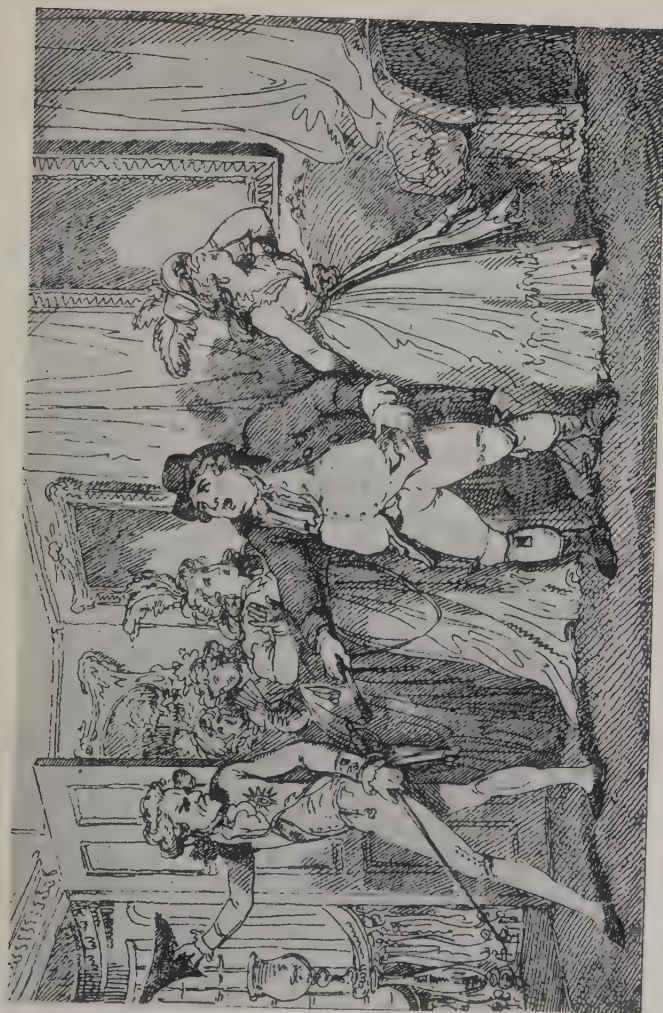
Fielding knew this long before it was generally accepted by even the more tolerant members of society. And the note he was the first to strike in the English novel has sounded through the

works of its most eloquent and beloved masters, and through none more so than through the works of Dickens and Meredith, who above all later novelists bear the most striking spiritual likeness to the author of *Tom Jones*. Fielding knew that a single or even a series of thoughtless lapses from rectitude did not stamp a man as vicious—that a villain was rarely all villain, and that goodness often lay behind actions that were usually condemned as being wholly evil. Variety in the individual was recognised by Fielding just as variety in species is recognised by the scientist. He was the first English novelist to treat human nature as natural history, which is one of the underlying principles of all great art. No fiction can live whose figures are merely the puppets of some preconceived idea or precept. And that was the main difference between Fielding and Richardson. He was no less a moralist, however, than the earlier novelist, but he preferred honest and frank frailty with its immense possibilities of goodness, rather than stereotyped and pompous rectitude.

*Tom Jones* is the direct opposite of *Clarissa*, but it is not merely a revelation of the heart of man, it

is a picture of human nature. It is an affirmation of the goodness of life against Richardson's affirmation of the goodness of mere morals. It is in many ways a rude boisterous book, full of loud laughter and roistering red-faced men and fair women. It is crude, vulgar, and frank; there is something elemental about its movement as it jogs along high roads and through villages; as it roars in country inns and wayside taverns, and frolics in the halls of portly squires. The least convincing character in the novel is Tom; he has occasional flashes of reality, but he is obviously made to pattern, a piece of "bespoke" characterisation, an abstraction, like Grandison, though not so insufferable.

The subsidiary characters are the great creations: Squire Western, like an eighteenth-century rural Falstaff; Sophia, the frank and self-confident lady of all time; Allworthy, Thwackum, Square, Mrs. Deborah, Partridge, the schoolmaster, Blifil, Molly Sequin,<sup>1</sup> and the whole gallery of realistic studies whose names alone would make a tolerable essay. And yet the impression left by this mixed and on the whole ribald crew is not offensive. One puts



LORD FELLAMAR RUDELY DISMISSED BY SQUIRE WESTERN  
*From Rowlandson's engraving*



down *Tom Jones* with a feeling that on the whole life is a clean and decent thing, and one is almost convinced by the argument of Fielding's fine enthusiasm for life and his epic tolerance, that virtue and instinct may be identical.

Fielding has no *finesse* ; he realises broad contrasts and situations that make one laugh aloud or weep bitterly. He never makes his reader smile lightly or whimper. The essence of his very coarseness is, that it may shock heartily : but it never leaves the nasty taste which usually remains after reading the delicate introspections and fine shades of sentiment of the more analytical novelists. Mr. Austin Dobson draws a comparison between Fielding and Hogarth which throws light on this point. Both, he says,

are equally attracted by striking contrasts and comic situations ; in both there is the same declared morality of purpose, coupled with the same virility of expression. One, it is true, leaned more strongly to tragedy, the other to comedy. But if Fielding had painted pictures, it would have been in the style of the *Marriage à la Mode* ; if Hogarth had written novels, they would have been in the style of *Tom Jones*.

Fielding, like the great satirical painter, has power, invention, humour ; he is a master of

terse phrase, ironic suggestion, and the rough comedy of a crowded and active life. His novels teem with vitality and good humour; they are, in the words of Taine, like "a pure, wholesome, and rough wine, which cheers and fortifies us, and which wants nothing but bouquet."



## TOBIAS SMOLLETT

OF the early masters of the English novel, Tobias Smollett is the least original and on the whole the least satisfying. But his work was by no means without some considerable influence on the literary taste of his time. His novels are entirely derivative, harking back to the picaresque mode of narrative, whose greatest English exemplar was Defoe, and admittedly based upon the finest of all specimens of this particular form of fiction—the satirical narratives of Spain. Into the framework thus adopted Smollett contrived to instil the restless and combative qualities of his own nature, and an individual, if not a penetrating, power of observation.

He was born in the year 1721 at Dalquhurn House, in the parish of Cardross, Vale of Leven, Dumbartonshire. His people were gentlefolk, known pretty familiarly in Scotland as the Smolletts of Bunhill, and latterly chiefly en-

gaged in law and medicine. Tobias George Smollett, the novelist, was the younger son of Archibald Smollett, who, himself a younger son, was not in the position to endow the lives of his children in such a way as to have encouraged idleness. So, after some school experience at Dumbarton, where he was noted for his Latin, Tobias was apprenticed to a medical practitioner named Gordon. There is scant record of his life after this until we hear of his arrival in London in 1739, with his first literary work, a tragedy called the *Regicide*, dealing with the murder of James I of Scotland at Perth, in his pocket.

His life as an apprentice is largely a blank, so far as history is concerned ; but Campbell has put it on record, with probably some truth, that he was “a restive apprentice and a mischievous stripling.” This description is borne out by an anecdote preserved by his friend and disciple, Dr. John Moore, who had a brief fame as the author of a romance called *Zeluco* :—

On a winter evening, when the streets were covered with snow, Smollett happened to be engaged in a snow-ball fight with a few boys of his own age. Among his associates was the apprentice of that surgeon who

is supposed to have been delineated under the name of Crab in *Roderick Random*. He entered his shop while his apprentice was in the heat of the engagement. On the return of the latter the master remonstrated severely with him for his negligence in quitting the shop. The youth excused himself by saying that while he was employed in making up a prescription a fellow had hit him with a snowball, and that he had been in pursuit of the delinquent.

“A mighty probable story, truly,” said the master, in an ironical tone; “I wonder how long I should stand here before it would enter into any mortal’s head to throw a snowball at me?” While he was holding his head erect, with a most scornful air, he received a very severe blow in the face by a snowball.

Smollett, who stood concealed behind the pillar at the shop-door, had heard the dialogue, and perceiving that his companion was puzzled for an answer, he extricated him by a repartee equally smart and *apropos*.

In starting out to capture London, the young Smollett was armed, besides his tragedy, with a number of letters of introduction to people of eminence. And he was in full hopes of getting the *Regicide* placed upon the stage with little delay. Through the influence of his friends he got to know such useful men as Lyttelton and Garrick. But in spite of such opportunities as acquaintanceship with the leading patron of

letters and the leading actor of the day gave him, the tragedy, which he considered a masterpiece of the first order, but which in reality was very second-rate stuff, was never performed. But not to be entirely defeated he printed the rejected play some years later, in 1749, with a lively preface in which he rated in good round terms all those eminent people who had failed to recognise its hazy merits.

With the failure of his first literary ambitions he turned round for some other means of subsistence, and, as a fleet of warships was on the point of sailing from Spithead for the West Indies, to rap the knuckles of Spain, who had become more than usually annoying in the region of the American colonies, he was fortunate, in so far as useful experience goes, in obtaining an appointment as surgeon's mate on one of His Majesty's ships. England had made up her mind in the matter and was determined to give her ancient enemy and then present irritant a final lesson. Her best ships were gathered together, and in October, 1740, under Sir Chaloner Ogle, they sailed to conquer the marauding armadas of the Far West. It is uncertain which of the line-

of-battleships was joined by Tobias Smollett, but it is certain that his experiences on this memorable expedition, which came to so unlucky an end at Carthagera, gave him material for his first notable work, *Roderick Random*, and incidentally made him the first characteriser of seamen in English fiction.

The navy at this period was perhaps at its lowest point of organisation and efficiency. The hopeless muddle into which things had fallen, coupled with the abominable treatment of the sailors, particularly during active engagements, gave Smollett a theme for his habitual indignation with men and their ways. So excellent are his descriptions of life in the navy during this campaign, that had he written no other book, *Roderick Random* would have been memorable for this alone. There was a deep-seated irascibility of temper in Smollett, which on more than one occasion militated against his own comfort, but it also served him as the fuel of an indignation, which was quickly aroused in the face of cruelty, treachery, and incompetence. He was one of those who would not suffer fools gladly, and the misery following the reverse of Carthagera, which

was brought about by the muddling of officers who were perpetually at loggerheads one with another, was a subject worthy his steel. He describes with satiric detail the whole series of disastrous events, including the differences of the leaders. Here is his appalling description of the treatment of the wounded during the battle :—

As for the sick and wounded, they were next day sent on board the transports and vessels called hospital ships, where they languished in want of every necessary comfort and accommodation. They were destitute of surgeons, nurses, cooks, and proper provision; they were pent up between decks in small vessels, where they had not room to sit upright; they wallowed in filth; myriads of maggots were hatched in the putrefaction of their sores, which had no other dressing than that of being washed by themselves with their own allowance of brandy; and nothing was heard but groans, lamentations, and the language of despair, invoking death to deliver them from their miseries. What served to encourage this despondence was the prospect of those poor wretches who had strength and opportunity to look around them, for there they beheld the naked bodies of their fellow-soldiers and comrades floating up and down the harbour, affording prey to the carrion crows and sharks, which tore them in pieces without interruption, and contributing by their stench to the mortality that prevailed.

This frank exposure of the condition of things in the navy went some distance towards bringing about that awakening of public feeling which sought by various means to improve the management and organisation of the fleet. Carlyle, in his caustic way, said that the only noticeable thing about the Spanish expedition was the presence of Tobias Smollett ; perhaps, in the light of after reforms, it would have been nearer the truth to have said that the most useful member of the expedition was Tobias Smollett.

After the fall of Carthagená the crippled fleet returned to Jamaica, where Smollett retired from the service and settled for a while at Kingston, where he fell in love with and married Nancy Lassells, a lady of some means, whose portrait is drawn in the person of Narcissa, the adored one of Roderick Random. He left Jamaica with his wife in 1744 and set up as a doctor in Downing Street, Westminster. He took his M.D. degree from Marischal College, Aberdeen, in 1750. For a time he practised medicine but gradually drifted into a life of letters. His first literary work after his return from



the Indies was satire. It was a satirical age, and satirists, since a taste for their wares had been created by the masterpieces of Swift and Pope, grew "plentiful as tabby-cats—in point of fact too many." But Smollett saw possible profit in the prevailing fashion, and, nothing loth, he joined the dance with three satirical poems, *The Tears of Caledonia* and *The Advice: a Satire*, in 1746, and with *The Reproof: a Satire*, in 1747. But it was not until the next year that he made any serious bid for fame, when he made a lasting name for himself with *Roderick Random*.

This long picaresque novel is based on his own life, but how far it would be safe to accept the story as fact, apart from the admirable passages of certain biographical authenticity, dealing with the Spanish War, is more than doubtful. Smollett, as we have seen, was by no means the inventor of this form of fiction, and, in the preface to *Roderick Random*, he owns his indebtedness to Le Sage, whose light touch and happily comic sense of human foibles, however, Smollett has not succeeded in catching. Indeed, this was not his aim. His aim was more

purposeful, for, like all the notable novelists before Sterne and Scott, he was a moralist, and sought to set his fellows in the right path. His method, like that of a later teacher-novelist, Zola, was not so much to point to the moral of any particular action as to depict human delinquencies in their most lurid colours, and by so doing help the reader to draw his own conclusions.

This treatment had at least the chance of promoting the illusion of reality, for its users were free of the fatal tendency among moralists and theorists to construct characters in order to wear the garments of abstract ideas. The pitfalls of this sort of realism, on the other hand, were an equally dangerous tendency towards gross frankness. It all, of course, depended upon the novelist. Smollett succeeded in so far as he steered clearly between his desire to please his public and his desire to teach them, and he created quite a number of really life-like people. But there was a coarser strain in his temperament which never permitted him to go far without exaggerating the more material sides of human nature. This was a matter entirely within the

taste of the eighteenth century, but it has gone far towards keeping Smollett out of the modern home or confining him to the locked cabinet.

He conceived the novel as, in his own words, "a large diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purposes of an uniform plan." And his novels come well within this idea. They are crowded canvases, full of characters and teeming with a coarse vitality. Smollett neither possesses the minute sense of the movement of emotion peculiar to Richardson, nor the jovial and healthy naturalness of Fielding; and it was not until he had read *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) that he had any sense of the more subtle, to say nothing of the gentler, forms of humour. The fun in *Roderick Random* too often becomes mere horse-play, and the action of the volumes is too much in the nature of a carnival of brutality to be entirely pleasing. Yet it is imaginable from what we know of the times that Smollett did not exaggerate over much, or at any rate not deliberately. The brutality of his books is a fault of his realism. He was

a quarrelsome, combative person himself, and this characteristic gave colour to his vision of men. He was on the look out for such things, and so got more of them into his books than most people are in the habit of seeing.

He, again, often raises laughter by exhibitions of merely brute strength, or by depicting the whims and oddities of people. And his habit of thus depicting eccentricity rather than interpreting character has the effect, whether he is actually guilty of exaggeration or not, of giving his readers the impression that he overstates his case. It is quite natural that such a writer should find little sympathy in France, where people have been long used to a daintier wit, a wit of the rapier, rather than of the broadsword. And when Taine says that "the generous wine of Fielding, in Smollett's hands, becomes brandy of the dram-shop," we feel that he is after all not only speaking for his own nationality, but at the present day, at least, for the majority of novel readers. Smollett was a barbarian in *Roderick Random*; he had no reticences and no consideration for the feelings of any one but himself. He satirises and carica-

tures in bold uncompromising strokes, which are so convinced of their own truth that they cause doubt in the eyes of all who behold them. They lack that little touch of psychology which makes all art kin. If Fielding was the Hogarth, Smollett was the Gilray of novelists.

The success of *Roderick Random* gave Smollett a more promising means of livelihood than the medical profession, although he did not burn his medical boats with undue haste, in fact, he turned an honest penny by exploiting his professional reputation with his pen in a tract entitled *An Essay on the External Use of Water, with Particular Remarks on the Mineral Waters of Bath* (1752). In 1751 he published his second novel, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, and in 1753, his third, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom*. In the first of these he imitated his first success but only succeeded in becoming tedious. *Peregrine Pickle* has all the faults of *Roderick Random*, with few of its good qualities, and besides this it lacks the cohesion which distinguished his earlier book, whilst *Count Fathom* is poorer still, it being nothing more than a feeble hotch-potch of *Jonathan Wild* and *Don*

*Quixote*. The barbarisms of his first book which are generally made at least tolerable by the skill with which they are held together, become nothing short of an uncalculating savageness in the disjointed pages of these later novels.

Smollett, although now famous, was not well known in literary circles and seems never to have come into the charmed circle of Samuel Johnson. He was not by any means without friends or even a circle of his own, and there are anecdotes left by some of his boon fellows which show him in a pleasant and even convivial light. But he was an ostentatious and dominant man, preferring, as is often the case, the slavish admiration of his inferiors rather than the friendship of his equals. His temperament was strong and self-reliant in so far as equals and superiors went, but he liked to lean on his dependents. In some respects this reminds one of the feudalism of Scott, who loved nothing better than to be surrounded by retainers, but in Smollett this love was not always free from mercenary ends. His retainers and dependents were only too often his literary hacks and slaves.

In this respect Smollett was not an artist, but

a business man. Like Defoe he became a busy and productive journalist. But his journalism never approached genius, as it did in the case of the founder of the *Review*. He edited various journals, among which were *The Critical Review*, a forerunner of the literary reviews of our own day; and from May, 1762, to February, 1763, he had a brief spell of political journalism in the editorship of *The Briton*, a journal founded to support the Bute administration. But Smollett's politics proved so unstable that the paper was stopped when Bute found that its methods were making him more enemies than friends. Smollett's other political venture was his pamphlet attacking Pitt, *The History of the Adventures of an Atom* (1769), one of the bitterest and most offensive lampoons in the language.

Under the term journalism, for the sake of convenience, may be classed all that ephemeral work which he did for the money it would bring in, such as the *Compendium of Voyages*; the *Universal History*; *The Present State of All Nations*; and his *History of England*. Besides this there were translations, the most notable

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being that of *Don Quixote*; and in 1757 a play called *The Reprisal: or, The Tars of Old England*, which was produced by David Garrick at Drury Lane. The more enduring *Travels through France and Italy* was issued in 1766, and his last book, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, which with *Roderick Random* are the two books on which his claim upon the future depends, was issued just before he died in 1771.

In 1752 Smollett took a house named Monmouth House, in Lawrence Street, and now devoted himself entirely to literature, and employed that weird band of hacks who aided him in the manufacture of his histories and other bibliographical wares. There is a famous description of this circle in *Humphry Clinker* which reminds one of Edgar Poe.

At two in the afternoon, I found myself one of ten messmates seated at a table; and I question if the whole world could produce such another assemblage of originals. Among their peculiarities I do not mention those of dress, which may be purely accidental. What struck me were oddities originally produced by affectation, and afterwards confirmed by habit. One of them wore spectacles at dinner, and another his hat flapped; though, as Ivy told me, the first was

noted as having a seaman's eye when a bailiff was in the wind, and the other was never known to labour under any weakness or defect of vision, except about five years ago, when he was complimented with a couple of black eyes by a player with whom he had quarrelled in his drink. A third wore a laced stocking, and made use of crutches, because once in his life he had been laid up with a broken leg, though no man could leap over a stick with more agility. A fourth had contracted such an antipathy to the country, that he insisted on sitting with his back towards the window that looked into the garden; and when a dish of cauliflower was set on the table, he snuffed up volatile salts to keep him from fainting. Yet this delicate person was the son of a cottager, born under a hedge, and many years had run wild with asses on a common. A fifth affected distraction. When spoken to he always answered from the purpose: sometimes he suddenly started up and rapped out a dreadful oath; sometimes he burst out a laughing; then he folded his arms, and sighed; and then he hissed like fifty serpents.

This is obviously a caricature, and incidentally it is a good specimen of Smollett's leaning towards the revelation of eccentricity; but it is founded upon the fact of the strange members of his intimate circle of workers. His idiosyncrasy for living a retired busy life among curious nonentities perhaps fostered the querulousness

of his nature and often got him into scrapes, which he rather enjoyed than otherwise. He liked a fight, and this was probably the basis of his satire, more than any sense of outraged feelings or crossed convictions. These satires also got him into trouble, and on one occasion he was fined £100 and imprisoned for three months in the King's Bench prison for criticising Admiral Knowles. But this incident throws rather a pleasant light upon Smollett. The criticism was anonymous and appeared in the *Critical Review*, and the prosecution was, of course, drawn against the printer. But the Admiral said that it was not a legal revenge he wanted, much less against a beggarly printer, but rather did he want to know who the writer of the article was, so that, if the culprit proved to be a gentleman, another form of satisfaction could be taken. Smollett, immediately upon hearing this, declared himself the author of the incriminating criticism. Whereupon the doughty Admiral retreated behind the letter of the law and contented himself with legal revenge. The King's Bench prison was no trial, for Smollett was treated as a prisoner of State

with no other punishment but that entailed by confinement.

In 1755 he went to Scotland and saw his mother, and about this time he visited the Continent. Besides this, he often went from his Chelsea home to Bath, for which town he had a great liking. All this travel does not seem to suggest impoverished conditions, but at this period of his life it would seem he was often in straitened circumstances. The novelist was never a man of robust health, and the failure of his editorship of *The Briton* worried him and preyed upon his mind at a time when his strength was on the decline, and when, in 1763, he lost his only daughter, the shock so overcame him that he had to go abroad, where he stayed until 1765, visiting France and Italy and publishing his impressions in the book of travels issued in the following year. On his return to England he lived for a while in Bath and went again to Scotland, but his health grew worse, and in 1768 he left England for ever. He hoped to obtain a consulship at Nice or Leghorn, but failed in his attempt to get an appointment. He settled at the latter place, where he finished his *Universal*

*History and Humphry Clinker*, and there he died in September, 1771.

He met his death with a grim courage which reminds one of a similar courage pervading the death-bed of Tom Hood, who suggested to a sorrowing friend that he would have "to apologise to the worms for offering them nothing but bones." A day or two before Smollett died, in a like spirit, he wrote to a friend :—

With respect to myself I have nothing to say but that, if I can prevail upon my wife to execute my last will, you shall receive my poor carcase in a box after I am dead, to be placed among your rarities. I am already so dry and emaciated that I may pass for an Egyptian mummy, without any other preparation than some pitch and painted linen.

Tobias Smollett was not a novelist whose work was essential to English literature, and yet coming at the time it did, his work, albeit not original in form, was a link of no small importance in the evolution of the novel. The picaresque novel wanted the modern note, such a note as Fielding and Richardson and Sterne had put into their own works, and this Smollett gave to it. In many ways he was more modern

to his day than either of the other great novelists, and perhaps the very note in his work, the gross barbarism of his atmosphere which shocks us now, is a truer picture of the colour and feeling of his environment than anything in the earlier novelists.

Because, after all, Smollett was freer than the other novelists ; they all had moral axes to grind, and they let you hear the scraping of the axe as it touched the wheel of imagination. Smollett had an axe to grind also, but it is not so easy to hear it scraping on the wheel of his art. Fielding's realism was a reaction against the sentimentalism of Richardson ; the realism of Smollett is an extension of that of Fielding into more material regions. It is more like photography.

His pictures of seamen are masterpieces, and they prepared the way for Marryat. Yet Marryat never drew more vital people than Lieutenant Bowling, Captain Oakum, Commodore Trunnion, or Hatchway. Fielding is undoubtedly a more profound writer ; his characters have something more than form—they have psychology ; but the best of Smollett's characters can hold their own

even in such good company. Humphry Clinker and Winifred Jenkins ; Matthew Bramble, Lismahago, and Tabitha Bramble ; Strap, the little French friar, and other delightful people are actual creations, and if not always quite so convincing as the realities of *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy*, they are worthy and companionable additions to the orders of the imagination.

His novels, said Hazlitt,

always enliven, and never tire us : we take them up with pleasure, and lay them down without any strong feeling of regret.

That is quite true. Smollett is never an inseparable friend, inspiring a deep attachment and the responsibilities of friendly relations. He is an entertaining acquaintance. One of those good and pleasant fellows who are known and forgotten, met casually and passed easily in the procession of life, yet giving colour and interest to the show, and supplying a need no less necessary and inevitable than the great friendships.



## LAURENCE STERNE

THE most curious fact in the life of Laurence Sterne is that he was a parson. There is really very little else to tell, for meagre as are the records of his short life, it is improbable that anything really essential to a picture of the humorist has been lost, and any further details could have done no more than give the portrait additional length or fuller background. As things are the picture is direct, firm in outline, and clear-cut. It reveals a sentimental egoist with a sense of humour which gives him a certain and definite balance, an insight into life, and a faculty for differentiating the reality from the myth of things. A person largely compact of vanity and selfishness, but frank and honest in his whimsical attitude towards life, and capable at least of one disinterested affection, love of his daughter. He had written "Whim" over the portal of his life and was not afraid of admitting it.

The career of Laurence Sterne, the writer of the *Sentimental Journey*, was largely occupied in a series of tragic journeys at first forced upon him by the irrevocable demands of his father's military life, and afterwards by the still sterner demands of ill-health. He was born on the 24th of November, 1713, at Clonmel, the son of a poor ensign in Chudleigh's foot regiment, which had been sent to Flanders to supervise the execution of the Treaty of Utrecht. Poor though Roger Sterne was, he was a member of a well-to-do family whose help was not unfamiliar to him. His kinsfolk hailed from Suffolk and were now settled in Yorkshire. His grandfather had been Archbishop of York, had suffered imprisonment at the hands of Cromwell, and been rewarded for his loyalty to the Stuarts on their return from exile. Roger was the seventh son of Simon Sterne, a younger son of the Archbishop, who had married an heiress, the daughter of Sir Roger Jaques of Elvington.

The wanderings of the poor ensign's section of the Sterne family were resumed immediately after the birth of Laurence. The following year found them in Dublin, and then the perpetual

motion of the regiment took them to Liverpool, Plymouth, Exeter, and back again to remote parts of Ireland. During this time the trials and discomforts of travelling were increased by the constant arrival of babies, whose consistent and early departure from the troubles of this world was their chief characteristic. "My father's children," said Laurence Sterne in after years, "were not made to last long." But more probably the rough life of the barracks was not made to keep children. The little bewildered ghosts came but to realise that such a world was no place for them, and so beat a hasty retreat. And it is certain that the conditions which so early removed his brothers and sisters left Laurence with the indifferent health that eventually developed into a fatal disease.

Roger Sterne was a kind-hearted, careless man, who afterwards served his admiring son as the lay-figure of the immortal Captain Shandy, "My Uncle Toby."

"My father," wrote Sterne,

was a little smart man, active to the last degree in all exercises, most patient of fatigue and disappointments, of which it pleased God to give him full

measure. He was, in his temper, somewhat rapid and hasty, but of a kindly sweet disposition, void of all design, and so innocent in his own intentions, that he suspected no one; so that you might have cheated him ten times a day if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose.

The simple-hearted soldier died of a fever whilst on service in Jamaica, in 1731, from whence he had been removed from Gibraltar, in whose defence he had served.

But Laurence's wanderings did not take him so far away, for, just before his father's departure on foreign service, he was sent to the Grammar School at Halifax, where, at the age of ten, in 1723, he began his education. From this time he seems to have passed under the care of relatives; his mother and only surviving sister practically passing out of his life. He is supposed to have spent eight years at Halifax, and in 1732 he went to Cambridge, obtained a sizarship and entered Jesus College in the following year, and after taking his B.A. degree in 1736 he left the University for York. His career at Cambridge was uneventful save for his forming an acquaintanceship with John Hall Stevenson, the

Eugenius of *Tristram Shandy*, master of Skelton Castle, and future author of the notorious *Crazy Tales*, a collection of extremely free ballads, in the making of which Sterne was supposed to have lent a hand. The intimacy which began at Cambridge, despite the fact that such a friendship was naturally looked upon as, at the least, indiscreet, "if no worse," Dame Gossip added, for the young cleric, lasted throughout life with the utmost congeniality on both sides. The spirit of Rabelais, incarnate in the genius of Sterne, was already showing itself, and it was quite natural that it should find companionship in the bizarre abandon of John Hall Stevenson.

Sterne was ordained by the Bishop of Lincoln in March, 1736, three months after taking his degree ; and on taking priest's orders in August, 1738, he was immediately given the living of Sutton-on-the-Forest, through the influence of his uncle, Dr. Sterne, Prebendary of Durham, and holder of seven other clerical appointments. This uncle, who was a famous politician as well as pluralist, became a very useful friend to Laurence Sterne ; but his services were not entirely disinterested, for the young novelist aided

him in politics by the compilation of newspaper paragraphs, and it was only on his refusal to continue such "dirty work" that the friendship was broken.

The clerical duties at Sutton-on-the-Forest did not at all prevent its unique vicar from following his whims. Such small offices as the living demanded still left ample margin to his days. But for a short time at least he showed no tendency towards literature. He was a light-minded, easy-going valetudinarian at this time, a reader of quaint histories and philosophy, fond of his table and his bottle, and a preacher of sermons not more dull than the average sermon of the day. He speaks of books, painting, and fiddling as being his "chief amusements," but in reality his chief recreation was then and throughout his life, flirtation. His love affairs commenced at Cambridge, and his whole life was a succession of sentimental adventures. And it is hardly to be wondered that the married life of such a militant sentimentalist should have gradually grown into a silent tragedy of mutual indifference.

In the short autobiography he wrote for his

daughter he thus relates the incidents of his courtship of Elizabeth Lumley, who became his wife.

At York I became acquainted with your mother, and courted her for two years. She owned she liked me; but thought herself not rich enough or me too poor to be joined together. She went to her sister's in S——, and I wrote to her often. I believe then she was partly determined to have me, but would not say so. At her return she fell into a consumption, and one evening that I was sitting by her with an almost broken heart to see her so ill she said: "My dear Laury, I never can be yours, for I verily believe I have not long to live! but I have left you every shilling of my fortune." Upon that she showed me her will. This generosity overpowered me. It pleased God that she recovered, and we were married in 1741.

With his marriage he obtained an additional living at Stillington, which had been promised to his wife if she married a clergyman.

In 1745 a daughter was born to them who barely survived her baptism, and in 1747 a second daughter was born, who became the object of his deepest affection, and eventually married a Frenchman named M. de Madalle, and later edited the posthumous *Letters* of her



father. It was after the birth of their second child that the relations between Sterne and his wife became strained, and never afterwards did the old love colour their lives. Sterne found living in a remote country parish not without its difficulties, and his association with John Hall Stevenson, whose country-seat, Skelton Castle, was in the near locality, created quite naturally something like a scandal in more exacting circles. But the jolly vicar was by no means abashed by these circumstances ; on the contrary, he took an impish delight in feeding the gossip that flickered about him, and *Tristram Shandy* was begun as a satire upon his respectable and punctilious exemplars. But before commencing this work he had made his first essay in secular letters with a satirical tract in support of Dr. Fountayne, Dean of York, in his effort to obtain a reversion of one of his numerous offices to his son. The work itself has no special merit save that it gives the first glimpse of that satirical vein which was afterwards revealed so fully in the Shandian philosophy.

There were probably two forces at work behind the production of *Tristram Shandy* in

its early stages. One was the previously named desire to hit the prejudices of the local gentry, coupled also with some wish to vindicate his own supposed virtues, as the creation of the character of Yorick, which was admittedly a piece of self-portraiture, would indicate; and, secondly, a wish to add something to an income which was always insufficient for his more or less extravagant needs. For, despite the fact that he said he wrote "not to be fed, but to be famous," his need of money had already prompted him to risk something in a speculative kind of farming which resulted in a loss, and which drew from him, in a letter to a friend, the exclamation, "Curse on farming! Let us see if the pen will succeed better than the spade." But it is quite certain that after the first parts of *Tristram Shandy* had been written, he quite dropped the local satire, and the book grew under his pen into one of the great masterpieces of humorous fiction—incidentally bringing him both the money and the fame he so much desired.

With all Sterne's faults of selfishness and vanity, he could have been by no means the

undesirable fellow the cold record of his doings might lead one to believe. He was a wit and a merry fellow to boot, not to mention his deep powers of observation and his well-stored mind ; it was by a strange irony that one of his mercurial temperament should have been thrown into the staid and, on the whole, narrowing surroundings of a country parish. Such a nature as Sterne's could hardly have been otherwise than that of an *enfant terrible* to the dull respectability of his district, and indeed there was ever something of childish wilfulness and youthful ingenuousness in his make-up. So much so that there is more than a little truth in the character he gives himself in self-defence in *Tristram Shandy*. After speaking of Yorick's lack of ballast, his kindliness and light-heartedness, Sterne goes on to the more subtle qualities of the good parson :—

He was utterly unpractised in the world : and, at the age of twenty-six, knew just about as well how to steer his course in it, as a romping, unsuspecting girl of thirteen : so that upon his first setting out, the brisk gale of his spirits, as you will imagine, ran him foul ten times a day in somebody's tackling ; and as the grave and more slow-paced were oftenest in

his way,—you may likewise imagine 'twas with such he had generally the ill luck to get most entangled. For ought I know there might be some mixture of unlucky wit at the bottom of such Fracas:—For, to speak to the truth, Yorick had an invincible dislike and opposition in his nature to gravity;—not to gravity as such;—for where gravity was wanted, he would be the most grave or serious of mortal men for days and weeks together;—but he was an enemy to the affectation of it, and declared open war against it, only as it appeared a cloak for ignorance, or for folly: and then, whenever it fell in his way, however sheltered and protected, he seldom gave it much quarter.

Sometimes, in his wild way of talking, he would say, that Gravity was an errant scoundrel, and he would add,—of the most dangerous kind too,—because a sly one; and that he verily believed, more honest, well-meaning people were bubbled out of their goods and money by it in one twelve-month, than by pocket-picking and shop-lifting in seven. In the naked temper which a merry heart discovered, he would say there was no danger,—but to itself: whereas the very essence of gravity was design, and consequently deceit; 'twas a taught trick to gain credit of the world for more sense and knowledge than a man was worth; and that, with all its pretensions—it was no better, but often worse, than what a French wit had long ago defined it, viz. “A mysterious carriage of the body to cover the defects of the mind”; which definition of gravity, Yorick, with great imprudence, would say, deserved to be wrote in letters of gold.”

*Tristram Shandy* was begun in 1759, and in 1760 the first two volumes were published by John Hinxham, in Stonegate, York. Dodsley, the leading publisher of the day, refused the book, although his name figures in the first advertisement as one of the booksellers from whom it could be obtained. The book had already created some sort of a stir in York, but this was purely on account of its local satire. In London the effect was different, and it had an immediate and phenomenal success, probably unlike anything since the days of *Pamela*. David Garrick was one of the first to recognise the work of genius, and he became the author's intimate friend. By the time Sterne got to London in March, *Tristram Shandy* was the rage, and to his great delight he became the lion of the moment. Garrick took the Yorkshire parson by the hand, and introduced him to the members of the gay and brilliant throng in which he moved. Before he had been in London twenty-four hours, his lodgings, in Pall Mall, were besieged by fashionable visitors, and before very long he had made the acquaintance of everybody of note in London society. "My

rooms," writes the delighted author, "are filling every hour with great people of the first rank, who strive who shall most honour me." And again, "The honours paid me were the greatest that were ever known from the great."

A second edition of the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* was demanded before three months were out, and to stay the demand for more, Dodsley published a volume of Sterne's sermons, the dull exercises of a country church which had done service in drowsing away the hours given to religion in far-away Sutton. That did not matter, the demand was up, and Dodsley said anything would do: the sermons of Yorick would exhibit the more recondite side of the humorist's character and please by contrast. So the sermons were published and more grist came to Sterne's mill. But this was not all, for the happy author had been introduced to Lord Falconberg, and the noble lord having a living in his gift at Coxwold, in Yorkshire, made Sterne a present of it. "A sweet retirement," he calls it, "in comparison with Sutton." There were rumours that his lordship's generosity was prompted by fear of the satirist pen, but there is



little foundation for such a suggestion, and the gift may easily have been the outcome of Lord Falconberg's desire to have so eminent a genius in one of his livings.

*Tristram Shandy*, for the third time since *Pamela*, had sounded a new note in the art of the novel, and it was a note of no little importance, because it established the principle that it was by no means necessary that a novel should be dependent upon plot. Sterne's masterpiece is a section of life, without any more obvious scheme than is to be seen in the reality: a section of life seen through a distinct and fascinating temperament. Its nine volumes appeared between the years 1760 and 1767, and they contain a whole collection of types and characters entirely new to fiction. There is no special hero of the book. Tristram, who tells the tale, never really becomes an embodied personality, he is like Wordsworth's cuckoo—a wandering voice. But such a voice as literature had never heard before. *Tristram Shandy* was not only a new type of novel, it was written in a new kind of English. It scintillates with short, bright, conversational sentences, strangely held together in a scaffold-



ing of amazing punctuation : colons, semi-colons, commas, with the minimum of full-stops and the maximum of communicative dashes, working together with wonderful volubility—like the varying expressions on the face of a talker—in fact, Stern invented in *Tristram* a written colloquial language.

It is one of those books that is liked or disliked ; there are no half-measures. Those who like it never tire of it. It is not to be read through, like an ordinary novel, from title-page to colophon, but to be opened at random and read anywhere, wherever the fancy listeth or wherever chance throws the vision of the reader. Quaint humour, irony, sharp wit, and piquant suggestion twinkle upon each of its densely packed pages. True, here and there occur passages over-frank or, to be precise, quite coarse. These belong to another age than ours, and they can be skipped—just as those other and perhaps more objectionable patches of dullness and pedantry can be skipped. It will not matter, for the humour of *Tristram Shandy* is half in its omissions and the other half in its digressions. The book is from one point of



UNCLE TOBY AND THE WIDOW WADMAN

*After the painting by Charles Leslie*



view a masterpiece of digression. Sterne is a sly Rabelais, gaining his ends, the same ends in many ways as those of Master François, by heaping hint upon hint, suggestion upon suggestion, where the creator of *Gargantua* piled up mountains of facts upon mountains of indiscretion. Rabelais hides nothing: Sterne is Rabelais veiled.

If the book has a hero that hero is, of course, none other than My Uncle Toby, the kindest, simplest heart in literature. But he does not dominate like a hero, he pervades like a sweet presence, an angel in homespun. Next to him comes the delightfully sententious and theoretical Mr. Shandy himself, who must not be separated from the unimaginative matter-of-fact wife of his bosom. The best of the lesser characters, if we leave out Yorick already mentioned, are undoubtedly the Widow Wadman, whose love affair with My Uncle Toby is so excellent an idyll and so famous an incident in the novel, and Corporal Trim, the faithful garrulous henchman of My Uncle Toby. These characters are more real than the men and women we meet in the street, and they reveal themselves almost completely by their talk.

It must not be supposed that *Tristram Shandy* is all laughter—there are tears as well, and shrewd wisdom. Sterne is as great a master of pathos as he is of humour. Throughout the novel are passages of the deepest pity, indeed, is there not something almost tragically pathetic in the still and inarticulate figure of Mrs. Shandy? And tears are not always absent from the laughter that surrounds My Uncle Toby like a nimbus. But the greatest piece of pathos in the novel is without doubt the story of Le Fevre, it is an inimitable episode, unique in its way and perfectly characteristic of Sterne. Corporal Trim tells the story in his simple way :—

He did not offer to speak to me till I had walked up close to his bedside. “If you are Captain Shandy’s servant,” said he, “you must present my thanks to your master, with my little boy’s thanks along with them, for his courtesy to me. If he was of Levens’s——” said the lieutenant. I told him your honour was. “Then,” said he, “I served three campaigns with him in Flanders, and remember him; but ’tis most likely, as I had not the honour of any acquaintance with him, that he knows nothing of me. You will tell him, however, that the person his good nature has laid under obligations to him is one Le Fevre, a lieutenant in Angus’s; but he knows me



SHANDY HALL

*From an engraving after T. H. Shepherd*





not," said he a second time, musing. "Possibly he may my story," added he. "Pray tell the Captain I was the ensign at Breda whose wife was most unfortunately killed with a musket shot as she lay in my arms in my tent." "I remember the story, an't please your honour," said I, "very well." "Do you so?" said he, wiping his eyes with his handkerchief; "then well may I." In saying this he drew a little ring out of his bosom, which seemed tied with a black riband about his neck, and kissed it twice. "Here, Billy," said he. The boy flew across the room to the bedside, and falling down upon his knee took the ring in his hand and kissed it too, then kissed his father, and sat down upon the bed and wept. "I wish," said my Uncle Toby with a deep sigh, "I wish, Trim, I was asleep."

In June, 1760, Sterne went to Coxwold to finish the next two volumes of *Tristram* at the little parsonage he had called Shandy Hall. The great success of the novel had not only filled him with delight, but with optimism; and he was prepared to supply two new volumes of the book every year for so long as the public would stand it. Vols. III and IV were issued in January, 1761, having been sold in advance to Dodslev for £380. But from about this time his happiness was to be marred by the

rapid inroads the fatal disease, consumption, was beginning to make in his system. He had always been more or less of an invalid, but now matters were becoming serious. Sterne, however, was again in London in the spring, and he did not return to Coxwold until July, 1761, and by the end of the year he had finished Vols. V and VI of *Tristram*. But his life was becoming more and more of a struggle against his disease. He must have been a lonely man in spite of his wide fame, and his unhappiness was not lightened by the fact that, perhaps naturally, his wife did not share with him the joys of his triumph. The important thing now, however, was that last remedy for the disease-condemned—a warm climate. A winter in England would have killed him.

Sterne left England at the beginning of January, 1762, for Paris *en route* for the south. In the French capital he found his fame had gone before him, and his reception was almost as great as his original reception in London had been. The change of air gave him a spell of better health, and the brightness of Paris awakened in him the old love of life. “My

head is turned," he writes to Garrick, "with what I see, and the unexpected honour I have met with here." With the fatal optimism of the consumptive he was convinced Paris was doing him good, and he still delayed going south. But now an impetus for a move came in the news that his beloved daughter had contracted asthma. He immediately wrote for Mrs. Sterne and Lydia to join him, and eventually they arrived in Paris, when the family set off for Toulouse, where they remained until June, 1763. Then he made short visits to Bagnères, Marseilles, and Aix, returning in October to Montpellier, where his wife and daughter had taken up quarters, and where he left them on his return to England in 1764. But previous to his return he spent a few weeks again in Paris. He had found no lasting pleasure in the continental towns he had visited, and now that he was back in the "sweet retirement" of Coxwold he could not rest. The next volumes of *Tristram* were overdue, and he felt no inclination to set to work. He wanted relaxation and took himself off to Scarborough; and Vols. VII and VIII were not published until January,

1765. Sterne's health was beginning to tell on his productivity. He had already conceived the idea of the *Sentimental Journey*, but the matter he had collected for this work he put into *Tristram*. Nevertheless, although he wrote less, what he did write was more masterly as art; his power increased until it culminated in that perfect example of the art of letters, *A Sentimental Journey*, which stands towards *Tristram Shandy* as the polished gem to the rough stone. In 1766 another volume of the sermons of Yorick was issued, and the final volume of *Tristram* in 1767. The sermons showed more of the Shandian spirit than the early volumes, and some of them must have been written for the press rather than the pulpit.

In 1765 Sterne went abroad again. He passed through Paris and Lyons, and went by way of Turin, Milan, Parma, Piacenza, Bologna, to Florence, and from thence to Rome and, later, to Naples, where he spent the winter of 1765-6. In May he set out again for England, meeting his wife and daughter again for the last time at Franche Comté. In June he was back in Yorkshire, finishing the last volume of *Tristram*.

In January, 1767, he arrived again in London on what proved to be his final visit. *A Sentimental Journey* was issued in February. This charming and graceful book was to have been as large as *Tristram*, but Sterne did not live to carry out his design. As a piece of literature it is unequalled in daintiness of wit and grace of expression ; it is conceived more in the spirit of comedy than the earlier work, but, apart from its exquisite form, it must always come second to *Tristram Shandy*, lacking as it does both the depth and breadth of that inimitable work.

Sterne had taken lodgings at 41 Bond Street, and there he died on the 18th of March, 1768. By an accident we have a unique picture of his lonely end given by the footman of one of his fashionable friends. The stricken novelist had been invited to dine at this friend's house, and not arriving at the appointed hour the footman was despatched to his lodgings, whilst the guests, including the Dukes of Roxburghe and Grafton, the Earls of March and Ossory, David Garrick and Hume, awaited his return. The footman returned and told this simple tragic tale : "I went to Mr. Sterne's

lodgings ; the mistress opened the door. I inquired how he did ; she told me to go up to the nurse. I went into the room, and he was just a-dying. I waited ten minutes ; but in five he said, ‘ Now it is come.’ He put up his hand as if to stop a blow, and died in a minute.”

Alas, poor Yorick !

But his tragedy was not yet ended. He was buried on March 22nd in the cemetery of St. George’s, Hanover Square, and of all the host of his admirers, two only were so poor as to do him reverence, his publisher and an unknown friend. Nor was this enough, for, two days after his burial, his body was stolen by body-snatchers and sold to the Professor of Anatomy at Cambridge. The Professor invited some scientific friends to witness the dissection of the body, and among these was one who had known Sterne and who fainted with horror on recognising the features of his friend.

This was the last of Yorick.

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

SIR WALTER SCOTT was the ripest fruit of the first period of the Romantic Revival. His was the final word, the complete symbol, of a simple acceptance of life and all its trials and experiences as part of a great adventure. After him Romance became introspective and mystical, it moved to another sphere, from the material to the spiritual. He was in one way a part of the reaction against the purely urban and highly civilised art of the first great novelists, Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne. But the traditions established by these, the old masters of the novel, had suffered some sort of reverse before the time of Scott.

During his youth and early manhood the new craving for romance, a craving which is never far below the surface of human experience, had been served in an inferior way, on dreams and nightmares of other times and other realms of



consciousness, as well as by a morbid and excruciating exhibition of sentiment, miscalled human feeling. The people were becoming nauseated by these unbalanced and maudlin tales, and they were ready to be led into the more robust paths of romance. These new desires were first satisfied by a revival of the romantic ballad extended into a metrical tale. Great personalities and movements were thus celebrated, and the enthusiasm with which such poems were received weaned public taste, for the time being at least, from prose fiction of every sort.

Scott's long poems were the success of the day, and, later, Byron took up the cause and continued the new tradition until it was superseded by the subtler romance of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and so on to middle nineteenth-century Pre-Raphaelite mysticism. The return to romance was really a return to poetry. "Pedestrian prose" had had a good spell of popularity, and the themes of prose had become somewhat stereotyped. It was this last as much as anything that turned public taste towards verse. There was really no great love for poetry as

such, but an insatiable craving for novelty, for as soon as Scott perfected the modern prose romance, public taste with unanimous accord went in that direction. Scott's great work in modern literature was a vindication of prose as a vehicle for the expression of moods which had hitherto been largely confined to poetry. And his tales inaugurate the era of the impersonal novel.

Sir Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh on the 15th of August, 1771. He came of a long line of ancestors, who up to the time of his father had never led other than an open-air life of farming, fighting, riding, and sporting. His father broke through the traditions of his clan by becoming a lawyer, and it is worth noting here that the whole of Sir Walter's life was dominated by what would seem like the call of his robust ancestors to the restitution of his ancient family life by the foundation of a new clan.

The most striking personal characteristics of the novelist can all be traced to these ancestors. His sentimental attachment to the house of Stuart to his great-grandfather, Walter Scott, who gained the surname of Beardie, because he would not cut off his beard after the banishment

of the Stuarts ; his love of speculation to his grandfather, who borrowed £30 to invest in sheep and set off to purchase a flock at Wooller in Northumberland, but on the way speculated the money on a hunter which he sold again to excellent advantage ; his love of method and his painstaking integrity of purpose to his father ; and his incomparable memory and taste for antiquities to his mother.

Of his mother he had the greatest admiration and knew himself to be indebted to her for a considerable amount of his genius. She was the daughter of a Scotch physician named Rutherford and lived to past eighty years of age. She had more than the ordinary intelligence of the women of her day and was possessed of an unrelaxing sense of the proprieties, so much so that even at the advanced age of four-score years she would sit bolt upright in her chair without touching its back, as though under the stern eye of her teacher. But her most remarkable gift was her memory. On the day before her death she recounted with great accuracy the real story of the *Bride of Lammermuir*, pointing out where it differed from the novel.

After the death of his mother Sir Walter paid the following tribute to her powers, in a letter to Lady Louisa Stewart. "She had a mind," he says,

peculiarly well stored with much acquired information and natural talent, and as she was very old and had an excellent memory, she could draw, without the least exaggeration or affectation, the most striking pictures of the past age. If I have been able to do anything in the way of painting the past times, it is very much from the studies with which she presented me. She connected a long period of time with the present generation, for she remembered, and had often spoken with, a person who perfectly recollected the battle of Dunbar and Oliver Cromwell's subsequent entry into Edinburgh.

Scott was the ninth of twelve children, of whom the first six died in childhood; five of the surviving children were boys, and the one girl was a chronic invalid. The lameness of the novelist was left by a "teething-fever" contracted at the age of eighteen months. It was because of this that the child was sent to live in the country with his grandfather at Sandi-Knowe near the ruins of the tower of Smailholm, which he afterwards celebrated in one of

his ballads. The child spent most of his life, when the weather was fine, in the open air, under the charge of a trusty shepherd, who would often leave him asleep or at play beside the sheep, a fact which ever afterwards left him with a peculiar tenderness for these animals. The fearlessness and freedom from superstition of his after life, which on one occasion permitted him to sleep at a wayside inn in the same room as a corpse, existed in the infant, for, being forgotten one day on the knolls when a thunder-storm came on, he was discovered by his anxious relatives crying "Bonny! Bonny!" and delightedly clapping his hands at every flash of lightning.

At six years of age he could roam about the neighbourhood alone, and in spite of his lameness clamber on to the back of his Shetland pony, an animal no bigger than a St. Bernard dog, which used to come into the house to be fed. He learnt to declaim long ballads at this age, and he would introduce an amazing amount of gesture and imaginative exclamation into the poems. He is described as the most astounding genius ever seen. He was, moreover, a child

of spirit and determination, but could easily be won over by those he loved, although his baby wrath in the face of injustice to himself was often emphatic to the degree of savageness. On one occasion a relative wrung the neck of a pet starling of the boy's, and, in after years, recalling the incident, Scott said : "I flew at his throat like a wild cat, and was torn from him with no little difficulty." He early developed a taste for history and antiquities and would sit at the feet, "all eyes and ears," of any one who discoursed upon such themes.

His schooldays were spent at the High School, Edinburgh, and later at Kelso. But his reputation for conventional learning was not high. Classics did not appeal to him, and although he learnt Latin, he absolutely refused to learn Greek. His inclinations and taste lay towards medieval times, and the more recent eras of British history, and he gloried in the Civil War and in the ideals of the Cavaliers. He loved to contemplate a life of action, and soldiers had a great fascination for him, a fascination not entirely sentimental, for in early manhood he became the next best thing to a soldier—a volunteer.

Later on, when he attended the law classes at the University of his native town, he learned Italian and German, and became enamoured of Ariosto and German romance ; he learned Spanish also, which led to his reading Cervantes, whose *Novelas* first inspired him with a desire to write fiction. His memory at this early age was retentive, but he afterwards explained that it was not a memory which retained everything, but only what hit his fancy. This probably was only another instance of the tremendous will-power that was his most remarkable characteristic. He only remembered what he wanted to remember.

He was not an encouraging law student, although he made a very creditable lawyer. As a youth he was given to wandering over the country with congenial friends in search of antique remains, and in this way he gained much of that intimate knowledge of the border minstrelsy which served him in the compilation of his first book. The history and legends attached to the old buildings he visited fired his imagination with romantic fervour, and laid the foundation of that fathomless store of historic knowledge upon which he drew so prodigally for



the Waverley novels. His wanderings and the company of boon companions led occasionally to festive hilarity at wayside inns and in the more familiar taverns of Edinburgh. Scott was, however, never given to undue abandonment, although the extravagances of youth often laid his slender means low. His greatest dissipations were walking beyond reasonable limits, and exhausting his pocket on the expenses of the road. On one of these occasions he and a companion returned to Edinburgh penniless, having had to subsist for the final days of their journey on the help of cottagers, and when this was not forthcoming, on the hips and haws of the hedgerows and the water of the mountain streams. In speaking of their trials to his father he had expressed the wish for a certain mendicant flautist's power of earning a living by playing on his reed. "I greatly doubt, sir," said his parent, "you were born for nae better than a gangrel scrape-gut."

After being called to the Bar he followed the legal profession, with no very great enthusiasm and with growing displeasure, for fourteen years ; and the most money he seems ever to have

earned in actual fees in one year was about £230. Several things were against his success in the law apart from his own distaste of it; not least of these was the knowledge on the part of possible clients of his predilection for poetry. A man could not be a good lawyer and a poet at one and the same time, it was argued, with some sort of consistency. In his eighth year at the Bar he accepted a small permanent appointment with £300 a year, as sheriff of Selkirkshire. And from 1806 to 1811 he discharged the duties of a Clerk of the Session of the Court of Edinburgh, gratuitously, for an invalid who held the post, in order to secure the succession to the office.

Long before this time Scott had married, but not before he had been stung with an earlier forlorn-hope love affair. He fell in love, "at first sight," with Sir John Stuart Belcher's daughter Margaret, whom he had met for the first time coming out of Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, in a heavy shower of rain. The fair lady was umbrella-less, and Scott, with not entirely disinterested gallantry, proffered her the use of his. For six years after this he dreamt of marrying Margaret Stuart Belcher, but her

parents frowned upon the match, and she ultimately became the wife of Sir William Forbes, a banker, who became one of Scott's most generous friends in his days of trouble.

This marriage occurred in the year 1796, and, as if to assuage his grief, Scott formed a new tie before the year was out with a Mademoiselle Charpentier, the daughter of a French Royalist of Lyons, who had died early in the Revolution. She had come to England after his death and lived under the protection of the Marquis of Downshire. Mlle. Charpentier became Mrs. Scott. She is described as a beautiful woman of some spirit, but little depth of character, and not quite suited as the wife of a genius of Scott's order. Nevertheless, although the marriage may not have been of the most desirable kind, there is little doubt that the result was on the whole happy. Two years before his marriage he had made his first attempt at poetry in a translation of Bürger's *Leonore*, a spectre-ballad of a melodramatic order which had some considerable popularity in Germany.

A few months after his marriage he took a cottage at Lasswade, on the Esk, about six miles

from Edinburgh, and here he remained from 1798 until 1804, during which time he definitely adopted literature as a career, writing and publishing several poems and the book which first gave him a reputation as a writer, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. The cottage he occupied was a pretty place surrounded by a beautiful countryside, but Scott added to the building, and the first stages of that taste, which afterwards became a passion for planting and altering his surroundings, now began, ending as every one knows in the ambitious scheme of Abbotsford, which contributed so seriously to his ultimate ruin.

In 1804 he left Lasswade and went to live at the beautiful little house near Selkirk known to all readers of *Marmion* as Ashestiel. Here in the midst of the romantic scenery lying between the Tweed and the Yarrow Scott lived that combined life of the open air and the study, dreaming on the one hand, among his beloved horses and dogs, of the great house he would found and the forests he would plant, and on the other of the romance of other days.

Arrayed in his shooting-jacket, or whatever dress he meant to use till dinner-time, he was seated at his

desk by six o'clock, all his papers arranged before him in the most accurate order, and his books of reference marshalled around him on the floor, while at least one favourite dog lay watching his eye, just beyond the line of circumvallation. Thus, by the time the family assembled for breakfast, between nine and ten, he had done enough, in his own language, "to break the neck of the day's work." After breakfast a couple of hours more were given to his solitary tasks, and by noon he was, as he used to say, his "own man." When the weather was bad he would labour incessantly all the morning, but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest; while if any more distant excursion had been proposed overnight, he was ready to start on it by ten, his occasional rainy days of unintermitted study forming, as he said, a fund in his favour, out of which he was entitled to draw for accommodation whenever the sun shone with special brightness.

So he spent his days at Ashestiel from 1804 to 1812. Among the works finished here were *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*; *Marmion*; *The Lady of the Lake*; *Rokeby*. Besides these, he wrote the *Life of Dryden*, and edited *Somer's Collection of Tracts*; *Miss Seward's Life and Poetical Works*; *The Secret History of the Court of James I*; *Queen-hoo Hall*; and started his work on the edition of Swift. By the time he left for his final home,

Abbotsford, he had become one of the most noted writers of the day. His poems were an electric success and selling in editions of thousands, as poetry had never sold before ; 2250 copies of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* were sold within a year of publication, and in the next two years 4250 copies were sold. Scott made the then unprecedented sum of £750 out of the poem. Great as this sum was, however, it was the smallest amount he received for any of his longer poems. Thus for *Marmion* he received 1000 guineas before publication, and Constable paid him 1500 guineas for *one half* the copyright of *The Lord of the Isles*.

The removal from Ashestiel to Abbotsford must have been an exciting and even wonderful performance. Here is one of Scott's own humorous accounts of it to a lady friend :—

The neighbours had been much delighted with the procession of my furniture, in which old swords, bows, targets, and lances made a very conspicuous show. A family of turkeys was accommodated within the helmet of some *preux chevalier* of ancient border fame ; and the very cows, for aught I know, were bearing banners and muskets. I assure your ladyship that this caravan attended by a dozen ragged rosy

peasant children, carrying fishing-rods and spears, and leading ponies, greyhounds, and spaniels, would, as it crossed the Tweed, have furnished no bad subject for the pencil, and really reminded me of one of the gipsy groups of Callot upon the march.

Abbotsford was now to be the home of his triumphs, of his far-reaching ambitions, and of his heroic fight with misfortune. In politics Scott had always called himself a Tory, but he was not a Tory in the superficial political sense. He was at heart a feudal lord. His whole life and work was the expression of this idea. His imagination lived in the days of the barons, and his poems and novels are practically an epic of the days of overlords and their retainers. He dreamed of founding a new clan with Abbotsford as its great demesne. And to this end he laid waste his fortune in translating the original house into a castle, in continually adding land to its whilom modest acres, and in carefully afforesting his estate. He loved to have dependents about him, and he acted towards those who were in his service like a generous nobleman. He accepted the baronetcy conferred upon him by George IV with pleasure,



not so much because it was a tribute to his literary merit, as because it was in keeping with the feudal idea of his life. And he was gratified beyond measure that the honour should have been conferred upon him by the King and not at the instigation of any democratic ministers of State.

There was ironic tragedy in the failure of these ambitions of the novelist—for all his feudal dreams came to naught. His son died childless, and his fortunes were suddenly reduced to nothing by the failure of his publishers in whose business he had become deeply involved. But this last disaster gave Scott that grim chance of becoming something far greater than a successful feudal lord and founder of a clan. It gave him that opportunity of heroic struggle to meet his liabilities which is without parallel in history.

Scott's financial disaster was the result of the combined failure of the firm of Ballantyne, in which he was the responsible partner, and that of Constable, in which Ballantyne's were seriously involved. He had been connected with Ballantyne's since he induced James Ballantyne to start business in Edinburgh in 1802, and financed him to the extent of £500 in the first instance.

When, in 1825, Constable's failed and pulled down with them Ballantyne's, Scott found himself saddled with obligations reaching the enormous amount of £117,000, for he considered himself solely responsible for the liabilities of the firm, and his sense of honour could not be satisfied until he had paid all his creditors. He met the crash with splendid fortitude—"Ill luck, that direful chemist, never put into his crucible a more indissoluble piece of stuff than your affectionate cousin and sincere well-wisher, Walter Scott," he wrote to Lady Davy,—and he set to work, at the age of fifty-four, to retrieve his fallen fortunes by his pen. A task made all the more difficult by his own hazardous and life-long habit of drawing his income upon the future, which he had done with increasing abandon since purchasing Abbotsford.

Some ten years before the financial disaster he had published *Waverley* (1814), and year after year he had poured forth a shining stream of magical romances—*Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *The Bride of Lammermuir* (1819), *Ivanhoe* (1819), *The*

*Monastery* (1820), *Kenilworth* (1821), *The Pirate* (1821), *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), *Peveril of the Peak* (1822), *Quentin Durward* (1823), *Redgauntlet* (1824), and so on, to name not all of his romances, and not to mention other literary work. Such productiveness alone was remarkable, but the almost extempore manner in which the romances were written is still more remarkable. Scott seemed to have the power of translating himself into a remote period, and visualising its life so vividly as to be able to recreate its very atmosphere and flavour in written words. His genius, as prodigal and abundant as Nature herself, suggests some occult power, like that possessed by the youth in Kipling's tale *The Finest Story in the World*. Lockart, in his monumental *Life of Scott*, gives a description of this superhuman energy in being, as seen by a friend whose window overlooked that of the novelist's study. Some friends were seated in the room, and the host noticing a shade come over the face of one of them intimated that he feared he was unwell.

"No," said he, "I shall be well enough presently, if you will only let me sit where you are, and take my

chair; for there is a confounded hand in sight of me here, which has often bothered me before, and now it won't let me fill my glass with a good will." I rose to change places with him accordingly, and he pointed out to me this hand, which, like the writing on Belshazzar's wall, disturbed his hour of hilarity. "Since we sat down," he said, "I have been watching it—it fascinates my eye—it never stops—page after page is finished, and thrown on that heap of MS., and still it goes on unwearied; and so it will be until candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night, I can't stand a sight of it when I am not at my books." "Some stupid, dogged engrossing clerk, probably," exclaimed myself, or some other giddy youth in our society. "No, boys," said our host; "I well know what hand it is—'tis Walter Scott's."

It was such an energy as this that was to be directed now towards the reparation of his broken fortune. Scott sat down to finish *Woodstock* two days after the crash, and for the rest of his life, day and night, through weeks, months, years, the tireless will of him drove that masterly pen. The strain told upon his health, but he was undaunted. When his hand failed him, he got a secretary. Then the strong brain wavered and tottered, but he kept on. Paralysis of the

brain laid him low, but he pulled round again, and went on working with half a brain, and ultimately his task was done and he threw down his pen with that same will of iron with which he had raised it. His will still lived, but Sir Walter was doomed, as good as dead: he had completely worn out body and brain.

Almost the last day at Abbotsford was spent with Wordsworth, who had come over from Rydal to see the novelist-stoic. The day was a happy and memorable one. Two days after, Scott left his native land for some respite in London and abroad. He visited Malta, Naples, Rome, Venice, and the Rhine, and whilst on a steamboat on that romantic river he was seized with a most serious attack of apoplexy, and had to be carried back to England. He arrived in London on the 13th June, 1832, and was taken to St. James's Hotel, Jermyn Street. There he lay a complete wreck, with but one desire, to get back to Abbotsford. To this sacred wish the doctors at length agreed, and Sir Walter was taken by steamboat to Edinburgh, arriving there on July 11th. He had been unconscious all the long way, but as the carriage which was taking him

from the Scotch capital to his beautiful home came in sight of the towers of Abbotsford, Scott regained consciousness, and sprang up with a cry of delight. His people came about him and his dogs leapt around his carriage for joy, licking their beloved master's hands whilst Sir Walter smiled and sobbed over them. He knew his end had come. "No repose for Sir Walter, but in the grave," he said. And he passed away in his sleep on September 21st, 1832.

So ended this proud heroic man. His great work lives on, still delighting generations of readers and still to delight the generations as yet unborn. "He saw life and told the world what he saw," says Professor Walter Raleigh,

Has any writer since his time supplied it with a fuller, fairer vision? From *Ivanhoe* to *Edie Ochiltree*, from *Lucy Ashton* to *Jennie Deans*, from the knightly achievements of the Crusaders to the humour of the Scottish peasantry,—this is the panorama he reveals, and he casts over it the light of his generous, gentle, delicate nature. His very style, loose and rambling as it is, is a part of the man, and of the artistic effect he produces. The full vigour and ease with which his imagination plays on life is often

suggested by his pleonasms and tautologies; the search for the single final epithet is no part of his method, for he delights in the telling, and is sorry when all is told. The asceticism of style belongs to a different race of artists, the lesser of whom are sadly anæmic. Sir Walter Scott is the first of the modern race of giants in fiction; his rapid series of great novels inaugurates a new era.



## EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

**A**MONG all the writers of the first half of the nineteenth century there is no figure so typical at one and the same time of its literary life and of its life of fashion as that of Edward Bulwer (afterwards Lord Lytton). He was by birth an English gentleman, coming of a family as ancient as any in the land ; by nature, a dandy, a fantastic person of eccentric tastes and habits and gorgeous apparel ; and, by inclination, a literary man of great ability and unequalled variety. His literary output was prodigious, greater than that of any other man of his time ; and, considering its varied character, of an all-round excellence which in itself is not unlike genius. He has been called *The Admirable Crichton* of modern literature, and, when the many departments of letters in which he practised are considered, this title, it will be admitted, was well earned. For Edward Bulwer Lytton wrote

novels and tales, histories and poems, essays and dramas, satires, political tracts, and orations, and in every literary form undertaken by him he was distinctive and in many cases eminent. He was a man of immense knowledge, and experienced in affairs and pleasures. Philosopher, historian, occultist, novelist, politician, and dandy: his busy and productive life was an epitome of the eclectic and active age in which he lived.

Edward Bulwer was born at 31 Baker Street, London, on the 25th of May, 1803. He was the third and youngest son of William Earle Bulwer of Heydon Hall, Norfolk, and Elizabeth Barbara, daughter of Richard Warburton Lytton of Knebworth, Hertfordshire. The Bulwers were of Scandinavian origin; the ancient reading of the name being Bolver, or Bulver, and in this form it is one of the war titles of Odin. The name is also borne by one of the Scalds, or warrior-bards of Scandinavia, and the place at which the Bulwers first landed in England is still called Bulverhithe. At the Conquest the estates at Wood Dalling, Norfolk, still belonging to the family, were assigned, by Aymer de



EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

*After the drawing by F. Say*



Valence, one of the followers of William of Normandy, to Turolde Bulver. The Lyttons are descended from an ancient family settled originally at Congleton, Cheshire, and at Lytton in the Peak of Derbyshire. This family dates from the Conquest. Knebworth Hall, the seat of the family, was acquired by Sir Robert de Lytton, who had fought at Bosworth, and who received many honours from Henry VII. There is also a Welsh strain in the Lytton family derived from a cousin, William Robinson Lytton, who inherited the estates on the death of the last English male heir, in the reign of William III. He claimed descent from Cadwaladr Vendigaid, who died in 664; and this branch can trace alliances with the Tudors and Plantagenets. The grandfather of Edward Bulwer was a man of some considerable learning, and a great linguist; he was pronounced by Dr. Parr, whom he had known at Harrow, as "the best Latin scholar of the day, inferior only to Porson in Greek, and to Sir William Jones in Hebrew and the Oriental languages." Like his more famous grandson, he was a student in the curious byways of philosophy and history, and a writer, although he only produced one work, a Hebrew

drama, which he burnt because he could find no actors who knew enough Hebrew to perform in it. Like his grandson also, he made an unhappy marriage, and separated from his wife soon after the birth of his only child Elizabeth. The child grew up with some literary accomplishments, married Bulwer in 1798, and came into the Lytton estates on the death of her father in 1810.

At the time of Edward's birth his father was colonel of the 106th Regiment of Norfolk Rangers, a regiment which he had raised himself, and of which he became general. He was an ambitious soldier, with immense will-power, uncertain temper, and the gout. It is on record that he quarrelled with his mother-in-law and frightened his wife. At the time of the threatened invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1804 he was one of the four generals entrusted with the internal defences of the country. The relics of their work are still to be seen in the military canal and Martello towers of the Kent and Sussex coast-line. General Lytton died at Heydon Hall in 1807, and his children were brought up by their mother. Of his two

brothers, William inherited the paternal estates in Norfolk, and lived the life of a country gentleman; and Henry, later Sir Henry Bulwer, and afterwards Lord Dalling, derived a considerable fortune from his grandmother, and became eminent in diplomacy and a member of the Privy Council.

The influences of so unique an ancestry could be traced in the singular and varied temperament of the novelist; but it was to his mother that he attributed the first inspiration and encouragement of his literary gift. He dedicated the first collected edition of his works in 1840 to her, and in the accompanying inscription he says :—

From your graceful and accomplished taste I early learned that affection for literature which has exercised so large an influence over the pursuits of my life, and you who were my first guide were my earliest critic. . . . Never more than at this moment did I wish that my writings were possessed of a merit which might outlive my time, so that at least these lines might remain a record of the excellence of the mother and the gratitude of the son.

His education was of an irregular order. At first he received some instruction from his



mother, but his precocity, which once prompted him to inquire of her whether she was "not sometimes overcome by the sense of her own identity," determined her to send him to school. He was first sent to a school kept by a Dr. Ruddock at Fulham, but he was so ill-treated that he was quickly removed, and after passing through one or more preparatory schools he was placed with Dr. Hooker of Rottingdean, whose academy was one of the most reputed of the day. There he was distinguished for intellectual quickness, and he took an absorbed interest in poetry, particularly in the works of Scott and Byron, then in the hey-day of their renown. He started a weekly school magazine, in which his earliest literary efforts appeared. In keeping with the characteristics of his manhood, he did not confine his activities to one section of life, but devoted himself with remarkable energy to all boyish sports. He was, like his father, of a hot and hasty temper, and would not brook a blow or an affront from any boy ; and, although by no means of robust build, he became the best pugilist in the school. He showed such physical and mental vigour that Dr. Hooker

recommended his removal to the more advanced sphere of a public school. His own view was that he was too old to be sent to Eton, so he persuaded his mother to place him under private tutors. In this request he had his own way, and his education was continued at first under the Rev. C. Wallington at Ealing, and later, for the purpose chiefly of mathematics, under the Rev. H. Thomson, who occupied his grandfather's old house at St. Lawrence. From thence he went into residence at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1822.

It was whilst under Wallington, with whom he read classics, that his poetic talent was first noticed. Wallington encouraged him to read and to discuss philosophy and politics and to make speeches ; and it was largely through him that Edward Bulwer became confident in his own literary powers. He had written several poems, and his tutor considered him a genius. When the youth was seventeen years of age he urged him to publish a selection of his poetic efforts. This he did under the title of *Ishmael, and other Poems*, in 1820. Besides this encouragement, his grandfather's old friend, Dr.

Parr, who was also his mother's guardian, took an interest in the young poet ; he corresponded with him and spoke of his intellectual promise with enthusiasm. His early poems, in keeping with the spirit of the time, were Byronic. Like all imaginative youths of the period he had come under the magnetic influence of the great romantic poet, and he, like many more, affected the passionate melancholy and dreamful sentiment of that unique personality. Colour was given to this, in the prescribed manner, by a love affair. During his stay at Ealing he became enthralled of a beautiful girl, who was forced by her father, in spite of her protestations, to marry another man. Three years later she died, and from her death-bed sent a letter to Bulwer, in which she described her sufferings and her continued devotion. This affair had a profound effect on the young poet, and it is said to have coloured his whole life. In 1826 he declared to a lady that love to him was dead for ever. One of his earliest poems, *The Tale of a Dreamer*, was composed after a visit to the grave of his beloved, and at the end of his life he describes the same incident in *Kenelm Chillingly*.

He only remained at Trinity College, Cambridge, for one term. The lectures were not to his liking, and he considered himself to have been insulted by a tutor, so, with his mother's permission, he removed to Trinity Hall, which he entered, after the long vacation, in 1822, as a fellow-commoner, and was thus excused from attending lectures. His chief fame at Cambridge is connected with the Union Debating Society, which he joined on the suggestion of his college friend Alexander Cockburn, afterwards Chief Justice. He entered into the debates with great energy, and soon became one of the society's leading speakers, and he was later unanimously elected its president. At this time he met many men afterwards to become eminent, among these being B. H. Kennedy, Maurice, Charles Buller, and W. M. Praed. He now began to lay the foundation of that wonderful historical and philosophic lore which was to be so useful to him in his career as a novelist. He did not follow the formal routine of the University, but confined his studies entirely to his individual taste in general literature, philosophy, and history, filling a collection of commonplace-

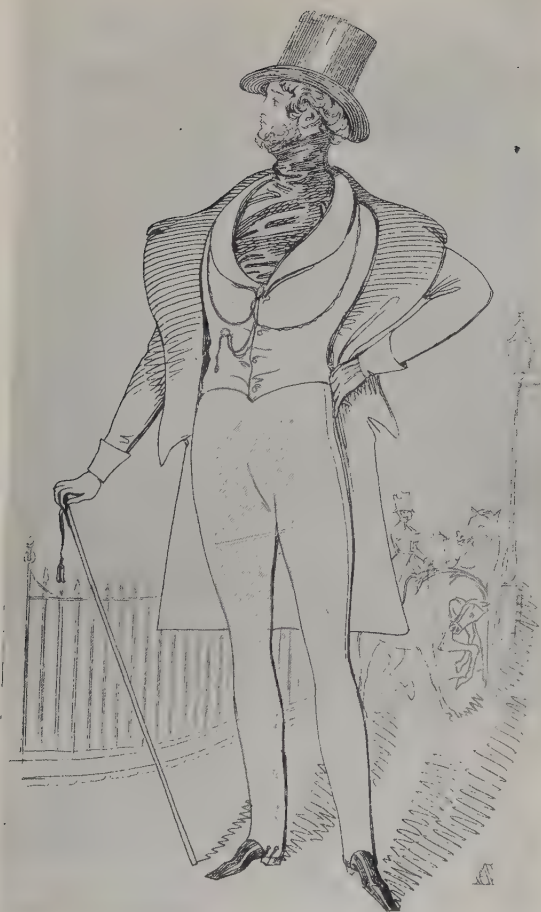
books, which eventually became the equal in bulk of his own published works, with such excerpts and reflections as appealed to him, and thus, no doubt, helping to form that fine memory which always served him so well. In 1823 he published a second volume of poems, *Delmour, or the Tale of a Sylphid, and other Poems*, and in 1825, in the last year of his residence at Cambridge, he won the Chancellor's gold medal by a poem on *Sculpture*; the prize was actually decided in his favour after he had left, and he went up to the University again to recite his poem in the Senate House. He took his B.A. degree in 1826, and that of M.A. in 1835; and in 1864 he received the honorary degree of LL.D. from his own University, after having previously received the same degree from Oxford.

Edward Bulwer was always at heart a man of action; he loved the adventurous path and the unknown way, and although he never followed this life in the conventional manner, his immense energy, which might have made him almost anything in the more vigorous walks of life, was directed into literature, and into the life of a

man of fashion. But before leaving Cambridge, during one of the vacations, he followed the inner bent of his genius by rambling in an adventurous way over the English Lake District and Scotland, in the company of a tribe of gipsies. And in 1826 he bought an ensigncy in the army, but was never appointed to a regiment, and sold his commission in 1829. But the details of this period are inextricably mixed with his fictions—actuality and romance are not to be separated with impunity. One of his authentic adventures, however, was a romantic flirtation with Lady Caroline Lamb, just before he left England for France. On his way to Paris, at Boulogne, he acted as second in a duel to his friend Frederick Villiers, who was his model for Pelham in his first successful novel. At Paris he moved amidst the most lively literary and artistic circles, was admitted to the society of the Faubourg St. Germain, and became acquainted with an Irish Jesuit, the Abbé Kinsela, who, but for the intervention of his mother, would have succeeded in marrying him to a member of a prominent Catholic family, the Marquise de la Rochejaquelein.

Bulwer led an active life in Paris and devoted a considerable amount of time to literature, retiring occasionally to Versailles for this purpose. He published privately whilst there a volume of poems entitled *Weeds and Wild Flowers*. But by far the greater part of his time must have been spent in the mere act of living—a proceeding which must have made large demands on his time and energy. Like his friends, Disraeli and D'Orsay, he was a finished and dauntless dandy. And, it should be remembered, dandyism does not stop at elaborate clothes. It is a system of life arising in the imagination ; stocks and stays, lavender pantaloons, embroidered waistcoats, silk-lined surtouts, rouge and curly locks, are but its outward expressions—the efflorescence of an inward grace. Dandyism presupposes an ornate mind to match its brave garments, and manners again to correspond. Thus, growing from within, it moves outward in delightful stages, courting only those surroundings which are as charming, as luxurious, and as leisurely as itself, and culminating in a round of brilliant repartee, gaming, and gallantry. To this ornamental life Edward Bulwer brought the





D'ORSAY

*After the drawing by Alfred Crowqui.*



fullness of his imagination, his youthful vigour, and his ready wit. He flirted and gamed with the best of them. He was, however, more moody than the average dandy ; his view of life was enveloped in a dreamy philosophic melancholy, accompanied by a picturesque abandonment, which won for him the surname of "Childe Harold" from an English lady in Paris, with whom he carried on an intimate correspondence. On one occasion he won a large sum of money at a gaming-house, but the experience disgusted him, and he never played again. At the same time he did not abandon his love of whist, at which game he became so skilful as to have been able to augment his by no means adequate income by his winnings.

In 1827 he married Miss Rosina Doyle Wheeler, niece of General Sir John Doyle, a clever and accomplished Irish girl of great beauty but uncertain, passionate temper. Bulwer's mother was against the match, and the marriage caused a temporary alienation from her and a cessation of his allowance. After the ceremony the young couple settled at Woodcot House, near Pangbourne, Berkshire, and there

Bulwer set to work with a will at his chosen profession of letters. He turned out an enormous amount of material, writing for magazines and reviews, for *Keepsakes* and *Books of Beauty*. In 1827 he published his first novel *Falkland*, a volume which he avowed was to him what the *Sorrows of Werther* was to Goethe. The book was more in keeping with the early novels of Disraeli, then beginning to appear; indeed, in this and his next novel *Pelham*, which was issued in the following year, he was working the same set of ideas and supplying a similar demand to that worked and supplied by his friend Disraeli in *Vivian Grey* and *The Young Duke*. *Falkland* was not a brilliant success, and Bulwer afterwards withdrew it from the list of his acknowledged publications, on the ground that it was an immature work written at the time of that crisis of thought and feeling common enough to the unsettled period between boyhood and manhood. The novel, however, so pleased Mr. Colburn, his publisher, that he offered Bulwer £500 for his next novel. The result of this offer was *Pelham*, which Mr. Colburn was advised by his reader not to publish, but he wisely ignored this advice.

*Pelham* was a great success, it became the rage, and gave its author a wide reputation at home and on the Continent. It was published anonymously and at first roundly denounced by the reviewers, but a different tone was adopted when *The Examiner* and *The Literary Gazette* asserted its wit, originality of thought, and amusing irony.

*Pelham* introduces the romantic type of man into fashionable society. The corsairs, bandits, and vigorous adventurers of popular romance were losing their hold upon people; they were too remote from the growing urbanity of society. A hero who should be still a hero without having to live in the Grecian Archipelago or the Swiss Alps was what the times demanded. So *Pelham* and Vivian Grey were created. This type had all the charm of being exotic and at the same time the advantage of being familiar. It was in reality the dandy become novelist's hero. The type of the wealthy young man of the world who risks honour and fortune for love of folly, but who, in the end, reveals himself a man of honour and a gentleman, beloved of the noble girl who disdained him for his wild oats, but who

eventually consents to become his bride, and with him to found a typically happy and comfortable British home. That is the simple formula, varied according to the genius of the novelist. In Bulwer's hands it became a sparkling and fascinating tale, a piece of wit and satire of great charm.

Bulwer left Woodcot, where a girl had been born to him on June 17, 1828, and settled at 36 Hertford Street, London. The difference between him and his mother was now mended, and she restored to him his allowance of £1000 per year. This, with the growing sums he was receiving for his literary work, freed him from financial worries. In December, 1828, he published *The Disownea*, for which he was paid £800; and six months later (June, 1829) he published *Devereux*, a story of the reign of Queen Anne, for which he received £1500; and in 1830 he brought out *Paul Clifford*, which, like *Pelham*, was largely a social satire, but worked out with more solemnity. *Paul Clifford* is a tragi-comedy steeped in an irony reminiscent of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*. The only publications of importance during 1831 were two

poems, *The Siamese Twins*, a satirical poem, and *Milton*, a poem, originally printed in the Paris volume, based on the legend of the Italian lady who saw Milton asleep under a tree and left some verses behind expressing her admiration of his beauty. In the same year, on November 8, a second child, a boy, was born, who afterwards became the first Earl Lytton, statesman and poet.

When Bulwer married Rosina Wheeler his mother prophesied that he would be "at a year's end the most miserable of men." As to time she was wrong, but in other respects only too right. His married life was a tragedy. So marked were the characteristics of infelicity in the lady of his choice, that not only his mother, but several of his friends, including Disraeli, had warned him against the alliance. They saw clearly that her self-willed and capricious nature was bound to clash with his exacting, nervous, and sensitive temperament. The trouble commenced after the birth of their first child, when the sudden success of Bulwer as a writer robbed her of his company to a considerable extent. In her defence it may be said that the fact that



she was always conscious of her disfavour in the eyes of his friends and family; and this, coupled with the loneliness of an author's wife, and the constant strain of having to live with a sensitive and self-absorbed man of genius, must, in the natural course of things, have told sooner or later on such a passionate and highly-strung temperament as hers. She, on the other hand, aggravated the difficulties of the position by word and deed. Matters grew from bad to worse, and after a series of trying scenes a legal separation was arranged in 1836. Bulwer allowed her £400 a year, but in spite of this her remaining years were a long and bitter tragedy. She began a series of attacks upon Bulwer from Paris; and later, in 1839, published a satirical novel, *Cheveley, or the Man of Honour*, in which her husband was the in no wise complimentary hero. On another occasion she appeared at Hertford during an election, when Bulwer was contesting the seat, and publicly denounced him. For a time she was placed under restraint on a medical certificate of insanity. But on her release she recommenced the attacks, and her grievance lived

with her until her death in 1882, eleven years after the death of her husband.

This was not the only trouble of his life, for Bulwer was never free of more or less malicious attacks upon his works. And in spite of the fact that these did little or no harm to the sale of his books, which in almost every instance, whether published anonymously or not, were wonderfully popular, they could not help being the cause of irritation to one of his sensitive nature. Political animosity had something to do with these attacks. Bulwer was a reformer in politics, and was elected to Parliament for St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, in 1831. In the House, although no great debater, his speeches usually made an impression, because they were carefully prepared and rehearsed, and delivered with considerable effect. He spoke in defence of the Reform Bill in 1831, and in 1832 he obtained a committee to inquire into the state of the laws affecting dramatic literature. Throughout his parliamentary career he advocated the repeal of taxes upon literature and of authors' copyrights. In the first reformed Parliament he was elected for Lincoln. In 1834

he wrote a pamphlet on the occasion of the breaking-up of the Whig Government, entitled *A Letter to a Late Cabinet Minister on the Crisis*, which, in spite of the fact that it was published at the comparatively high price of three shillings and sixpence, ran into twenty editions.

On the return to power of Lord Melbourne's Ministry, Bulwer was offered a lordship of the Admiralty, which he declined on the ground of his devotion to a literary career; and in 1841 he lost his seat because he had recommended his constituents to accept the compromise of a small fixed duty on corn proposed by Lord John Russell. He did not return to political life until 1851, when he published *Letters to John Bull, Esq.*, advocating the same fixed duty on corn. This difference with the Liberals became properly defined when, in 1852, he was elected to the House for Hertfordshire in the Conservative interest. He was appointed Secretary for the Colonies in Lord Derby's Ministry (1858-9) on the initiative of Disraeli. After leaving office he ceased to take the same conspicuous part in politics, and upon Lord Derby's return to power, in 1866, he was raised to the peerage as Baron

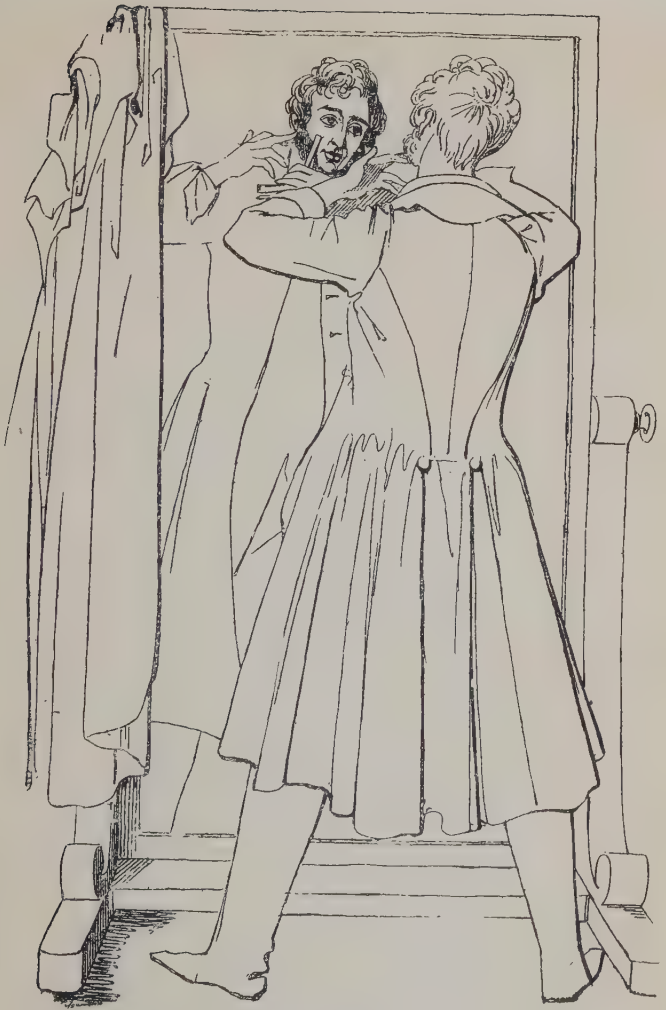
Lytton of Knebworth. "He is a real Baron," said Disraeli on this occasion, "though he will, I think, be the first, and not the last of his race." His friendship with Disraeli had not been impaired in the slightest by their former differences in politics, for throughout the whole time they had exchanged visits and letters, carrying on that intellectual criticism of each other which had begun far back in the thirties. At the time Bulwer came under the influence of occultism, for which he was heartily chaffed by his friend, he divined Disraeli's future by a process known as geomancy, which in the light of after events was startlingly accurate.

Parliament did not interfere much with his literary output. He went on producing novels, poems, essays, and plays with amazing fertility. *Eugene Aram* (1832), the first of that class of his novels based on historical fact, was followed by *Godolphin* (1833); *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* and *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834); *Rienzi* (1835); *Ernest Maltravers* (1837 and 1838); *Night and Morning* (1841); *Zanoni* (1842); and *The Last of the Barons* (1843). Besides these novels he published two large volumes on *Athens, its Rise and Fall*, edited a

magazine called *The Monthly Chronicle*, and commenced writing plays and having them produced. The first of these, *The Duchess de la Vallière*, was brought out by Macready in 1836, but it was not a success. In 1838 Macready gave him a hint for another play, and in a fortnight he wrote the *Lady of Lyons*, which was an instantaneous success, and has been played off and on ever since. Next year two more of his plays were produced, *Richelieu* and *The Sea Captain*; and in 1840 his comedy, called *Money*, was successfully played at the Haymarket Theatre. In 1846 he published his *New Timon*, a satirical and romantic story in heroic couplets, in which occurred that famous attack upon Tennyson and his namby-pamby imitators, to which Tennyson replied with some clever, yet unnecessarily abusive verses in *Punch*. As the verses which caused the trouble and their reply throw some light upon the literary views of the time, they are worth quoting. In *Timon* Bulwer sang:—

Not mine, not mine—O Muse, forbid!—the boon  
 Of borrow'd notes, the mock-bird's modish tune,  
 The jingling medley of purloin'd conceits,  
 Outbabying Wordsworth, and outglittering Keats;  
 Where all the airs of patchwork pastoral chime,  
 To drown the ears in Tennysonian rhyme!

. . . . .



EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

*After the drawing by MacLise*





Let school-miss Alfred vent her chaste delight  
On "darling little rooms so warm and light";  
Chant "I'm a-weary" in infectious strain,  
And catch the "blue fly singing i' the pane";  
Though prais'd by critics and ador'd by Blues,  
Though Peel with pudding plump the puling Muse,  
Though taste the Saxon purse controls,  
And pensions Tennyson while it starves a Knowles.

And in *Punch* Tennyson made this fighting  
reply :—

## THE NEW TIMON AND THE POET

We know him, out of Shakespeare's art,  
And those full curses which he spoke—  
The *old* Timon, with his noble heart,  
That strongly loathing, gently broke.

So died the *Old*; here comes the *New*,  
Regard him! a familiar face—  
I thought we knew him. What! it's you,—  
The padded man that wears the stays;

Who kill'd the girls, and thrill'd the boys  
With dandy pathos when you wrote;  
O Lion! you that made a noise,  
And shook a mane *en papillotes*!

And once you tried the Muses too—  
You failed, sir; therefore, now you turn!  
You fall on those who are to you  
As captain is to subaltern.

But men of long enduring hopes,  
And careless what the hour may bring,  
Can pardon little would-be Popes  
And Brummells, when they try to sing.

An Artist, sir, should rest in Art,  
And waive a little of his claim ;  
To have a great poetic heart  
Is more than all poetic fame.

But you, sir, you are hard to please,  
You never look but half content,  
Nor like a gentleman at ease,  
With moral breadth of temperament.

And what with spites, and what with fears,  
You cannot let a body be ;  
It's always ringing in your ears  
“ They call this man as great as me ! ”

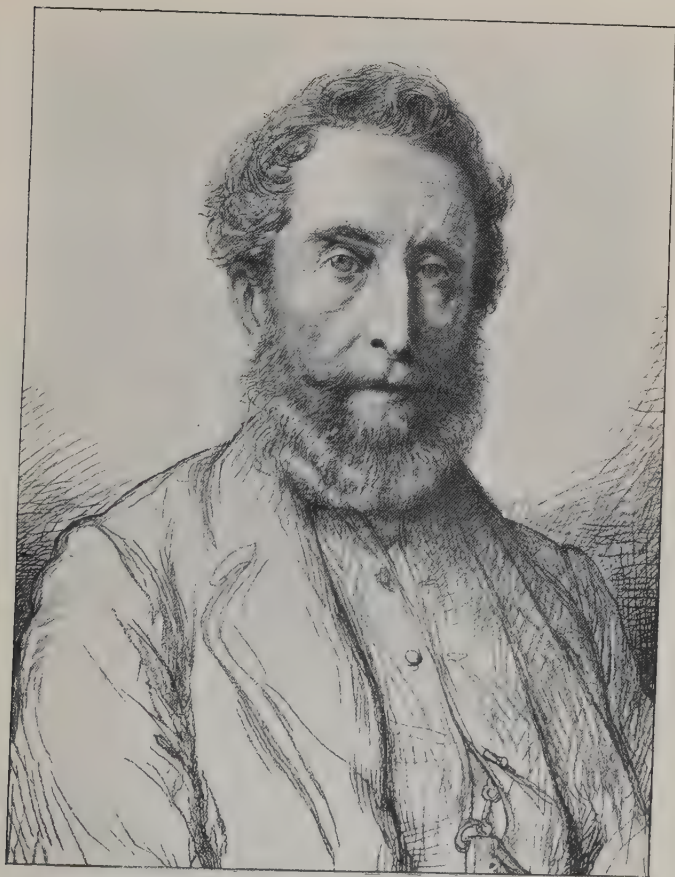
What profits how to understand  
The merits of a spotless shirt,  
A dapper boot, a little hand,  
If half the little soul is dirt ?

You talk of tinsel ! Why, we see  
Old marks of rouge upon your cheeks !  
You prate of nature ! *You* are he  
That splits his life upon the cliques.

A Timon you ! Nay, nay, for shame—  
It looks too arrogant a jest,  
The fierce old man, to take *his* name !  
You band-box, off, and let him rest !

Bulwer, no doubt, got more than he bargained for from Tennyson ; but undeterred he went on producing novels in the same prodigal manner. With *Zanoni* he admitted the public into that mysterious occult world in which one half of his imagination had dwelt for many years. And although, generally speaking, he expected the romance to be taken as an objective tale, he considered the volume in a very real sense a parable of the as yet inscrutable world which lies beyond the realm of sense. In 1847 he published *Lucretia, or the Children of the Night*, which, like *Eugene Aram*, is based on actual incident, this time on the life of Thomas Griffiths Wainwright, the art-critic and poisoner, whose strange fantastic life must have had a strong fascination for a man of Bulwer's imagination. His seeming friendly attitude towards crime, as exemplified in these novels, occasioned some adverse criticism, and he defended himself in a paper called *A Word to the Public*. During this time a domestic form of novel from his pen was appearing anonymously in *Blackwood's Magazine*. It was published with great success in 1849 under the title of *The Caxtons*. This was followed by

three others in the same vein, *My Novel* and *What will he do with it?*, and *The Boatman*, each attributed to Pisistratus Caxton. *Harold*, his last and in some ways his best historical novel, appeared in 1848; and in the same year he published an epic poem called *King Arthur*. After this burst of activity there was a lull, and nothing was produced until 1851, when his comedy *Not so bad as we seem* appeared. This comedy was written for the amateur company of which Dickens was the moving spirit; and it was performed on the 27th of May at Devonshire House, Piccadilly. Bulwer had supported a scheme for a Guild of Literature and Art, in which Dickens and others were interested. The scheme languished, and to waken it up he gave a piece of land near Stevenage, Hertfordshire, upon which, out of the profits of *Not so bad as we seem*, he erected three houses for decayed authors. The little estate was opened by a festival in 1865, with Bulwer and Dickens as president and vice-president, but the whole scheme collapsed for lack of decayed authors. Bulwer's creative energy now began to wane. He published a few more poems; a metrical



LORD LYTTON



comedy, *Walpole, or Every Man has his Price*; the translation of the Odes of Horace; a prophetic novel, *The Coming Race* (1871); and *Kenelm Chillingly* (1873). *The Parisians* was issued posthumously. After his death it was found that he had left behind unfinished novels, poems, and essays equalling in bulk the whole of his published works. For some time previous to his death he had suffered from a disease of the bones of the ear. This gave him more and more pain, and was the immediate cause of his death, which occurred at Torquay on the 18th of January, 1873. He left strict instructions in his will that his remains should be placed in the family tomb at Knebworth, after careful and minute examination to prevent premature burial; but this desire was overruled by public opinion, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton was laid to rest with the masters of English literature in Westminster Abbey.

Bulwer-Lytton is an author who has always eluded the judgment of critics. He had all the faults of the rapid popular writer, and it was always being prophesied that he would write himself out. But popularity passed his faults by, and he went on producing books of a very



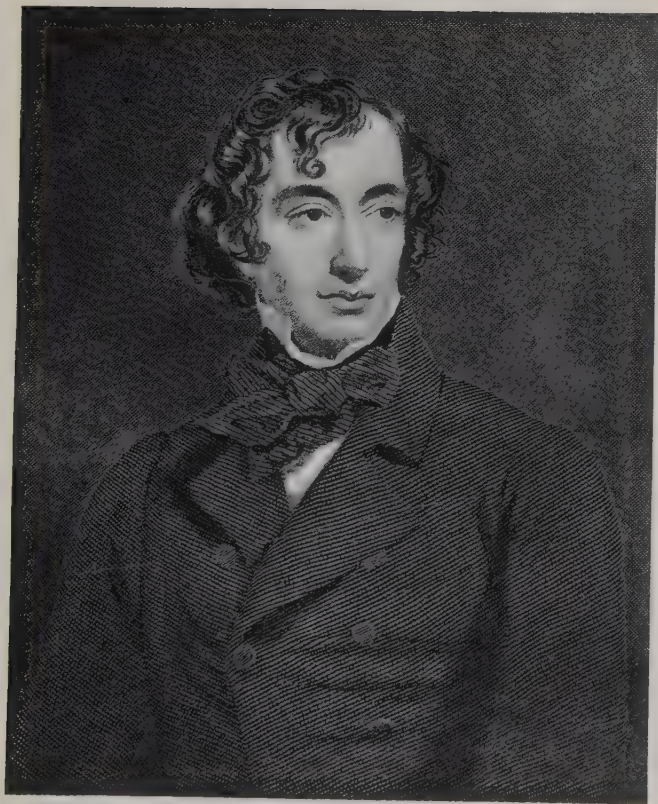
excellent standard with little cessation until just before his end. He wrote half to please himself and half to gratify popular taste, and between the two struck a balance which gave him fame and fortune. The success of his novels may be imagined when it is known that Messrs. Routledge gave him £20,000, in 1853, for a ten years' copyright of a cheap edition of his novels; and they found the bargain so much to their advantage that at the end of the period they gave him another £5000 for a further term of five years. At the present day Lytton is not read so widely as of yore, but such novels as *Eugene Aram*, *Harold*, and *The Last Days of Pompeii* will never lack readers so long as there are minds simple enough to marvel at the spectacle of history and the tragedy and heroism of noble lives. Of his more singular works, such as *Zanoni* and the *Coming Race*, there will always be a small public of those who turn to novels for intellectual suggestion rather than mental recreation. Lytton was a prose Byron. A master of broad romance, of tragic heroism, and mysterious fantasy. He was a visionary and an idealist with a unique gift for telling a story in attractive and eloquent English.

## BENJAMIN DISRAELI

ENGLISH history has no more interesting character either from the political or personal points of view than Benjamin Disraeli. He was an exotic, a rare product of a different race and clime than ours, and his very presence in the more subdued atmosphere of English social life gave him distinction. The Disraelis were descended from those Jews who had never wandered farther from Palestine than the shores of the Mediterranean. They had probably settled in Spain at the time of the expulsion of their race from the Holy Land, and there they remained prospering and mingling with the natives of the land of their adoption, until that fate which has ever dogged the steps of the Hebrew race, this time in the form of the Spanish Inquisition, set them wandering again. But they had remained in Spain long enough to have left their mark upon the character and physique of its people.

The Disraelis had become allied with the ancient family of Lara, whose name and arms they were entitled to bear. But, when they fled from Spain, in the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, to escape the tribunal of Torquemada, they renounced their Spanish name in an endeavour to eradicate all remembrances of the land of persecution.

The family took up its abode in Venice, where, in spite of many stringent restrictions, the Jews were left free to follow their genius for commerce, and there they prospered and became powerful. On arriving in the Venetian Republic they took the name of D'Israeli, "from gratitude to the God of Jacob, who had led them through unexampled trials and unheard-of dangers," and also, probably, in that spirit of race pride which, amidst all his conformity to British conventions, was a marked trait in the faith of their great English descendant. During the early years of the eighteenth century the waning of the trade of Venice, which had begun some years before, became noticeable, and the natives who were dependent upon commerce had to look about for new fields for their energies. In this way



BENJAMIN DISRAELI

*After a portrait by Sir F. Grant, P.R.A.*



it came about that the head of the D'Israeli family allowed his eldest son Benjamin to try his fortune in England. And thus the English branch of the ancient family was founded, for the Benjamin D'Israeli who came to our shores in 1748 was the grandfather of the Benjamin Disraeli who became Prime Minister of England and who made his Queen Empress of India, and who gave to his country the keys of the eastern world in the form of the Suez Canal shares ; he gave also his country what will probably be a more enduring heritage than either of these—a series of brilliant novels.

Benjamin D'Israeli was an astute and diligent business man, and he soon amassed wealth in his northern home, and at one time had ideas of founding a financial house which should rival the house of Rothschild. But this idea must have been abandoned, for he retired to his country house at Enfield at a comparatively early age, content with the fortune he had made, and from thenceforth devoted himself to a life of ease in the Italian garden he had laid out, and in the company of the friends he delighted to entertain, with whom he would

play whist and sing canzonets, in both of which arts he had some skill. His dream of founding an aristocracy of finance was probably dashed by the irascibility of his wife's temper and the complete failure of his only son to take any interest in business affairs. His wife yearned for social distinction, a thing not easy for Jews to attain in those days, and it is said that she never forgave her husband his name, nor her son his first poem—for the boy Isaac was enthralled by that Muse who had then even a smaller place in society than she has now. Many attempts were made to cure Isaac of his poetic tendencies, but all to no avail. He was sent abroad to the business houses of friends, but he spent his time in libraries and *salons*, and returned to England more romantic and more convinced of his poetic mission than ever. So his parents abandoned hope, and giving their recalcitrant son a fair income (which was handsomely increased on the death of his father), they left him to his poetic faith and fate.

Isaac D'Israeli became a minor literary sage, surrounded by books and learned people; the author of now forgotten poems, and treatises

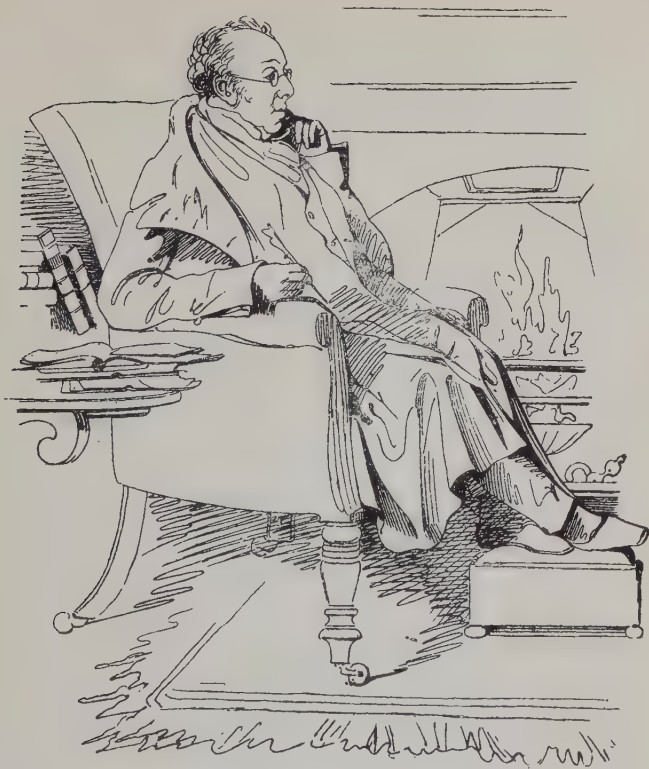


on religion and philosophy, and of the *Curiosities of Literature*, a volume which brought him no little fame. He married the sweet-tempered and affectionate daughter of Mr. George Basevi, of Brighton, and settled at first in the Adelphi, and later at No. 6 King's Road, Gray's Inn (now 22 Theobald's Road), where Benjamin, the great D'Israeli, was born on the 21st of December, 1804. There were three other children of the marriage, Sarah a bright girl of high intellectual gifts, and two boys, Ralph and James.

Isaac was the last of the family to use the original rendering of the name D'Israeli. The English branch of the family, although never doubting the worthiness of their Hebrew descent, were sufficiently worldly to see that any foreign peculiarity was out of key with the island prejudices of their new homeland. This was made easier for them because they had never considered themselves bound to associate with the members of their race as such. "The Disraelis," says Froude, "retained something of their Spanish pride, and did not like to be confounded with the lower grades of Hebrews whom they found

already established here." Nevertheless, both Isaac and his father married in their religion, and their children were received into the Jewish Church in the customary manner. But a change finally overcame the never strict orthodoxy of Isaac D'Israeli, and during the early years of his married life he withdrew from the Jewish congregation, and the entire family became members of the Church of England. The children were taught the catechism, and Benjamin was baptised at St. Andrew's Church, Holborn, on July 31st, 1817.

Benjamin Disraeli always spoke with pride of his descent, which he considered equal if not superior to that of any of the British aristocrats, and he referred proudly to his name as one "never borne before or since by any other family." At the same time he was not averse to altering its spelling when he found that course expedient. "Oh, knock out the apostrophe; it looks so foreign. Write my name in one word—Disraeli," he said to the editor of the local paper when he stood for Maidstone in 1837. And later he did the same for his father when editing an edition of that gentleman's works.



ISAAC D'ISRAELI

*After the drawing by Alfred Crowquill*



He early found the foreign look of his name a stumbling-block in his political career. The reality of this came out at Maidstone, when his opponent on the hustings, Colonel Perronet Thompson, made capital out of the popular prejudices by referring to him as "Mr. Disraeli—I hope I pronounce his name right." But Disraeli was at as little loss for a smart rejoinder then as at any time in his career. "Colonel *Perronet Thompson*," he said, in a succeeding speech, "I hope I pronounce his name aright."

Benjamin Disraeli was born in an atmosphere of books, learned references, and disputations. He afterwards referred to himself as having been "born in a library." This was literally true, for the house of Isaac D'Israeli must have been little short of a book repository. The old bibliophile meditated among his tomes like an initiate in a temple. He was never happy unless in the company of his Elzevirs, his Aldines, and his stamped calf folios, with their pages golden with age and, often enough, with wisdom also. And his spare hours in London were spent in rambles from bookshop to bookshop, and self-satisfied returns loaded with bookish

spoil. "All the rooms were covered with books," says Benjamin, "including that in which I was born." And such surroundings could not have been uncongenial to a mind born to think and an imagination born to dream.

At this period of his childhood the Romantic movement in England was at the height of its activity. Walter Scott was producing his lyrical romances and Byron had issued his early poems. *Childe Harold* commenced to appear in 1812, when Disraeli was nine years old, and two years later Scott's great series of romantic novels was inaugurated with *Waverley*. The intellectual air vibrated with wonder and mystery. And with the coming of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley, a new heaven and a new earth was opened out before those who had eyes to see or ears to hear. The world strove for its lost youth, and many looked upon life with the wonder of little children. Throughout literature there was a revolt against material traditions, just as in politics the old institutions of the State were being challenged and broken. Demands for freedom of thought and freedom of action were being made on all sides; human rights were

upheld against the right of authority, and nature was being set up against convention. Mankind had become conscious of the desire to grow, and it had realised that it could only do so by being itself; by following the light of its own instinct as embodied in individuals. Benjamin Disraeli was deeply affected by this half-conscious movement, and the conditions of his early life fostered the development of his romantic nature.

Isaac D'Israeli gave his children much of their own way. He probably remembered the ineffectual attempts of his parents to strangle his own youthful inclinations; and probably also his preoccupation with books left him little time for the details of the domestic side of life. Anyhow, Benjamin was allowed a margin to his days for the expression of his own tastes and whims. He received his first schooling at the small educational establishment of a Mr. Poticary, at Blackheath; and there he remained until about 1817, when the circumstances of Isaac D'Israeli were considerably improved by the death of his father. The family now left King's Road and took up their abode at No. 6 Bloomsbury Square. There was some talk of



sending Benjamin to Eton preparatory to his entering one of the Universities, but this plan was not carried out. The unpopularity of the Jews was so marked that a child of the despised race would have run great risks of insult and possible ill-usage from the boys at a public school of those times ; so it was decided to send the lad to the school of Dr. Cogan, a Unitarian, at Walthamstow. But his stay there was a brief one, for the quality of the education was not up to the standard demanded by a youth who was already beginning to show marked intellectual powers, and he was shortly removed to complete his education at home.

There is little record of his schooldays save those descriptions of the school-life of Vivian Grey and Contarini Fleming in his two early and largely autobiographical novels. Here the accounts have all the advantages and disadvantages of self-portraiture. But from what we do know of the imaginative and assertive youth, they can be accepted as at least fundamentally true. He always knew himself to be different from other boys of his age. "I could not yet analyse my feelings," says the boy

Contarini Fleming, and we may well imagine these words as coming from the young Disraeli, "I could not, indeed, yet think : but I had an instinct that I was different from my fellow-creatures, and the feeling was not triumph, but horror." When he went to Walthamstow he was fifteen, but the world he entered was so new to him that he felt as one entering a strange land. In the person of Contarini again, he says :—

For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by struggling and excited beings. Joy, hope, sorrow, ambition, craft, dulness, courage, cowardice, beneficence, awkwardness, grace, avarice, generosity, wealth, poverty, beauty, hideousness, tyranny, suffering, hypocrisy, tricks, love, hatred, energy, inertness, they were all there and sounded and moved and acted about me. Light laughs and bitter cries and deep imprecations, and the deeds of the friendly, the prodigal, and the tyrant, the exploits of the brave, the graceful, and the gay, and the flying words of native wit and the pompous sentences of acquired knowledge, how new, how exciting, how wonderful !

Into the little world of school the sensitive and imaginative boy stepped. He was a youth of striking beauty, tall, with pale face, regular

features, and a wealth of dark curls, and his nature was as distinct from that of his school-fellows as his appearance. He was then, as ever afterwards, a lonely person. He knew he was different, and he knew the school to be an epitome of the great world, whilst his companions were happy in their indifference of such things, and too full of the exciting contest of their days to brood upon their resemblance to the whole of life. Disraeli, to a great extent, stood apart and watched the contest in silence. He was in it, but not of it, although, at the same time, he was not without some pleasure in the life of the school, and he enjoyed the companionship of the boys and relished their spontaneous and, on the whole, generous natures. He reserved his greatest wrath for the teachers who offered him words when he wanted ideas. He would even join in the school games, and was capable of defending himself in the accredited British fashion, though with foreign savageness, if we can accept the fight in *Contarini Fleming* literally, which we may do with some sort of safety.

A romantic friendship had existed between

Contarini and another boy named Musaeus. The companionship on the side of Contarini was coloured with his imaginative fervour, and when he realised that Musaeus was after all a commonplace youth, and not the heroic fellow of his mind's eye, he instantly closed the friendship. This was against the schoolboy code of honour, and the public opinion of the academy had to be satisfied. Contarini, like Disraeli, could not be driven, and when the two hundred boys of the school approached him under the leadership of the head boy, his indignation knew no bounds. This attempt to influence his "private feelings by the agency of public opinion" turned indifference into disgust and contempt, and he treated the whole affair with a sneer. Some one hissed him, and on demanding an avowal from the originator of this insult, the head boy came forward accepting its responsibility. "Suppose I hissed, what then?" he demanded. "Why, then I would thrash you," said the now infuriated Contarini. Then the battle commenced. Contarini fought like a tiger.

I would never wait between the rounds [he says], I cried out in a voice of madness for him

to come on. There was breathless silence. They were thunderstruck. They were too generous to cheer their leader. They could not refrain from sympathising with inferior force and unsupported courage. Each time that he came forward I made the same dreadful spring, beat down his guard, and never ceased working upon his head, until at length my fist seemed to enter his very brain; and after ten rounds he fell down quite blind. I never felt his blows; I never lost my breath.

He could not come to time; I rushed forward; I placed my knee upon his chest. "I fight no more," he faintly cried.

"Apologise," I exclaimed; "apologise." He did not speak.

"By heavens, apologise," I said, "or I know not what I shall do."

"Never!" he replied.

I lifted up my arm. Some advanced to interfere. "Off," I shouted. "Off, off." I seized the fallen chief, rushed through the gate, and dragged him like Achilles through the mead. At the bottom there was a dunghill. Upon it I flung the half-inanimate body.

This fight is characteristic of Disraeli, although the battles of his life were to be actually fought in another ring. Yet in politics and dialectics he always fought with the same relentless purpose and with the same romantic energy.

But in manhood the passion was the more forceful because confined within the limits of the intellectual weapons. Where his passion burned and flashed in a consuming frenzy during youth, it burnt, during manhood, with a contained and penetrating light. The Achilles of the school-field became the Sphinx of Westminster.

Consciousness of his own power and destiny were never entirely absent from the mind of Disraeli. The future was opened out before his imagination, and he always saw himself as a leader, as a conqueror. Never for a moment did he humble himself before circumstance or time. He was a man of destiny with a difference; for, captain of his soul and master of his fate, he would bend the future to his will. He would take his destiny into his own hands and mould it to his heart's desire. He was ambitious because he was certain of his power—and he was determined to use it. His father's prestige as a writer was a help to him in his early days. The house in Bloomsbury Square was a meeting-place for all kinds of thinkers and dreamers, and the young Disraeli had unique opportunities of association with the most intel-

lectual and brilliant people of his day, many of whom were only too glad to take an interest in the handsome and gifted youth. His father intended him for the law, and Benjamin acquiesced in this parental wish so far as to serve three years in a solicitor's office in Old Jewry, where he was noted for his assiduity and attention to business, and afterwards to allow his name to be entered at Lincoln's Inn. But the whole bent of his genius was against such a career, and he was never called to the Bar.

Literature claimed him as it had claimed his father before him ; and his father, although not immediately giving up all hope, did not press matters, knowing too well, from his own youthful experiences, how that might end. Benjamin had not, however, made up his mind as to what career he should adopt. He knew only two things for certain, one, that he would not be a lawyer, and two, that he would be eminent in some career. He was ambitious, clever, and impatient. "Beware of trying to be a great man in a hurry," his father warned him. But Disraeli had his own views, and hurried on with the adventure of living for power. At about



this time he received much benefit from association with a Bloomsbury family named Austen. Mr. Austen was a successful solicitor, and his wife a lady of considerable beauty and culture. She was also a brilliant conversationalist, a musician, and an artist. Young Disraeli was welcomed at her *salon*, and encouraged by her in every way. And under this influence he wrote his first novel *Vivian Grey*, a sparkling piece of writing, half foppery and half wisdom, which appeared anonymously in 1826 in two volumes, followed by two sequel volumes in the next year. The youthful author succeeded, if not in putting himself into the book, at least in putting his own ideas and his own point of view into it. But besides this he infused into his story something of far more commercial value than "self"—scandal. And the book was an immediate success. It aroused the curiosity of the Upper Ten, and everybody sought to discover the personalities behind the veil of fiction. Keys were published, and *Vivian Grey* became the fashion.

The novel is in reality a political satire and in effect the first political novel in the language.

But nowadays its interest does not lie so much in its politics as in the light it throws on the early ambition of Disraeli. The motto of the book is characteristic of the young man :—

Why, then, the world's mine oyster,  
Which with my sword I'll open.

Vivian is Disraeli, or rather the personification of Disraeli's ideas. He has the same ambitions and the same astounding self-confidence. Politics, fashions, and popular foibles are criticised and satirised with full-blooded impudence but excellent good humour. And although the calmly unscrupulous Vivian Grey is the author himself, poetic justice is done him in the frustration of all his calculated political schemes. Perhaps Disraeli for a moment doubted the worthiness of his cheerful egoism. The most interesting point about *Vivian Grey* is that in its pages appears the idea which not only appears in various forms throughout his works, but which was probably the underlying idea of his life : the idea that the really strong man, the unique individual, is not the man who is controlled by circumstances, but the man who controls not

only his environment, but destiny. The idea is first enunciated in this book in the character of Beckendorf, the bourgeois prime minister, who discourses to Vivian on this view of life.

During the days of *Vivian Grey's* success Disraeli was overtaken with a strange illness—a kind of giddiness,—on one occasion accompanied by a trance, which he described as like a consciousness of the earth's rotation. Travel was recommended, and he went abroad with the Austens, visiting France, Switzerland, and Italy. On his return he went into the country, his family having gone to live at Bradenham Manor House, about two miles from High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire. In the beautiful and quiet surroundings of his new home Disraeli continued writing. He finished *Vivian Grey*, wrote *The Young Duke* and several political satires, one of which—*Popanilla*—had a considerable vogue as a criticism of the utilitarian school of economists, in the course of which he denounced those Corn Laws against whose repeal he fought so vigorously a few years later. But the disorder which had come upon him so strangely got no better, and further travel was

prescribed, so in June, 1830, he and a talented young friend named William Meredith, who was engaged to be married to his sister, set sail for Spain.

This journey was one of the most memorable and delightful experiences in his life. Gibraltar, Cadiz, Malaga, Malta, Turkey, Greece, Palestine, and Egypt were visited, and Disraeli contrived to impress the natives with his splendid personality and gorgeous apparel wherever he went. His letters to his family are full of vivacious charm and Byronic enthusiasm. He returned to London very much improved in health and matured by the unique experiences of his tour, and plunged into the midst of the most brilliant society, whose fringe he had hitherto only touched. Disraeli the Younger, as he was called, was now a person of note. Famed not only for his brilliant novel, but for his high intellectual attainments, his ready wit alternated with romantic silences. And in addition to all this he was a complete and splendid dandy—one who could flaunt his gorgeous waistcoats, his vast stocks, and his amazing canes with the best of his kind, with



DISRAELI THE YOUNGER

*After the drawing by Alfred Crowquill*



Bulwer and with D'Orsay. His dandyism had begun at an early age, and whilst on his Mediterranean tour it created no little sensation. He wore his hair long, and the rich brown curls falling over his right temple excited the interest of the ladies. They mistook his hair for a wig, and he wrote home, saying, "I was obliged to let them pull it to satisfy their curiosity." And from Gibraltar he wrote of the envy and admiration his costume caused among the subalterns ; and again he writes :—

I have also the fame of being the first who ever passed the Straits with two canes—a morning and an evening cane. I change my cane on the gun-fire and hope to carry them both on to Cairo. It is wonderful the effect those magic wands produce. I owe to them even more attention than to being the supposed author of—what is it? I forget.

Many are the stories told of the young writer at this time. One account of him tells how he appeared at a dinner party wearing a black velvet coat lined with satin, purple trousers with a gold band running down the outside seam, a scarlet waistcoat, long lace ruffles falling down to the tips of his fingers, white gloves



with several brilliant rings outside them, and long black ringlets falling down upon his shoulders. But the best of these records, although probably somewhat exaggerated, is that left by Willis, the American author, who met him at Lady Blessington's :—

He was sitting in a window looking on Hyde Park, the last rays of sunlight reflecting from the gorgeous gold flowers of a splendidly embroidered waistcoat. Patent leather pumps, a white stick with a black cord and tassel, and a quantity of chains about his neck and pockets, served to make him a conspicuous object. He has one of the most remarkable faces I ever saw. He is lividly pale, but for the energy of his action and the strength of his lungs would seem to be a victim of consumption. His eye is black as Erebus, and has the most mocking, lying-in-wait sort of expression conceivable. His mouth is alive with a kind of working and impatient nervousness; and when he has burst forth, as he does constantly, with a particularly successful cataract of expression, it assumes a curl of triumphant scorn that would be worthy of Mephistopheles. His hair is as extraordinary as his taste in waistcoats. A thick, heavy mass of jet-black ringlets falls on his left cheek almost to his collarless stock, which on the right temple is parted and put away with the smooth carefulness of a girl. The conversation turned on Beckford. I might as well attempt to gather up the foam of the

sea as to convey an idea of the extraordinary language in which he clothed his description. He talked like a racehorse approaching the winning-post—every muscle in action.

*Contarini Fleming* was published in 1832. In this psychological romance his gift as a novelist becomes more apparent. Disraeli had been drawn towards poetry during his journey abroad, and *Contarini* is a portrait of himself in the rôle of poet. The most lasting thing about this novel, apart from the fine Byronic frenzy with which it is imbued, is its deep philosophical note. Disraeli is in a transition period, politics for a while seem vain and empty, and the whole outlook of his life is clouded and undetermined. Yet the philosophic egoism, enunciated so foppishly in *Vivian Grey*, becomes a profound idea in *Contarini Fleming*. A mystic note is struck which is new to the English novel. But the mysticism of Disraeli is not separated from life nor from robust inquiry. "All is mystery," he says, but it is only slaves who do not struggle to penetrate the mystery. And deeper he goes still when he says that "Destiny is our will, and our will is nature," anticipating as he does

the ideas of the egoistic philosophers of our own day. Disraeli was the first novelist and one of the first English writers to realise the coming of an era of the will.

He was soon decided as to his future and began to devote time and study to politics. He went much into society and was a constant attendant at Gore House, where his friend, Lady Blessington, held her literary court. At this famous *salon* he met all the notabilities in art and letters and many interesting figures in high politics. Lady Blessington was a friend of the Napoleons, and to her house came Louis Napoleon and Count de Morny; and Bulwer Lytton, D'Orsay, Tom Moore, and later Charles Dickens were among those who frequented this famous intellectual resort. This life of fashion and the expenses of political contests now begun made a large demand upon the young novelist's pocket. But so convinced was he that sooner or later fame and fortune would be his that he never allowed pecuniary difficulties to stand in the way of his career; and it has been estimated that his debts at one time were over £20,000.

In 1834 he published his poetic fragment the

*Revolutionary Epic*, in which he was to have appeared as a new Homer for the modern world. But he never succeeded even in rising as high as a passable minor poet. Then followed two of his lesser novels, *Henrietta Temple* and *Venetia*, written in the midst of those growing political interests which, for the next six years, were to engage all his attention. In 1832 he had offered himself as a candidate for High Wycombe, but without winning the seat; and after standing and being defeated in several other constituencies, he was returned for Maidstone in 1837. From this time he was to spend the greater part of his life at Westminster. Three weeks after taking his seat he made that maiden speech which the House would not hear. But Disraeli was undaunted. "I will sit down now," he called with prophetic earnestness over the din, "but the time will come when you will hear me."

The time did come, and sooner than those who had laughed him down imagined, for the young member threw himself into the political game with tremendous vigour. He gained early fame as the opponent of his leader, Peel, on the

then burning question of the Corn Laws whose repeal Sir Robert supported. Disraeli came upon Parliament at a time of flux. There were few commanding personalities and fewer vital ideas in the house. The new member for Maidstone had both personality and ideas ; and although he looked to politics as a profession, he was none the less a man with a mission, and a sincere believer in the ideas behind his parliamentary tactics. These ideas exist in a permanent form in his novels, more particularly in the great trilogy which began with *Coningsby* in 1844, followed by *Sybil* in 1845, and concluded two years later with *Tancred*.

Disraeli saw England in the grip of a commercialism which, if not checked, would destroy her. He sympathised with reform and would have gone very far towards improving the lot of the poor and the industrial classes who were being mangled beneath the wheels of the juggernaut car of the profit-monger, but he saw no hope for the country unless its nobility could be rejuvenated and made conscious of its responsibilities, as it was in the best days of feudalism. His desire was to revive the old sentiment of

*noblesse oblige*; but he had as little faith in the ineffectual and pleasure-loving members of the aristocracy as he had in the money-loving Whigs and industrial overlords. Out of this feeling sprang the Young England movement, which attracted to Disraeli many of the most earnest and most able of the younger members of the aristocracy and the middle classes.

In *Coningsby* he interprets the idea of a re-created nobility. He shows that if England is to be saved she must be saved by her aristocracy, but that can never come about until the aristocracy alters its ways and realises that its existence is not justified by self-indulgence, but by responsibility. In *Sybil* he deals with the condition of England, and shows how effete Parliament has become in the face of the immense difficulties before her. Unfettered competition has despoiled the countryside and demoralised the people. Rural depopulation grows apace and the land is going out of cultivation. On the other hand, with the rapid growth of the towns labour becomes less certain, wages fall lower, and poverty becomes a chronic evil, with adulteration and crime in its train. Disraeli

contrasts this state of affairs with that of the feudal age, when the guild system controlled industry and men were taught crafts, and there was a limit put to inferior production. Then comes *Tancred*, the strange novel of political mysticism, with its incomparable irony, its fantastic wit, and wonderful Oriental colouring, all working towards the dream of Disraeli's heart, the coming of the New Jerusalem, in which Judaism shall at length realise its fullest expression in the revelations of Christianity.

After the publication of *Tancred*, Disraeli ceased to be a novelist for nearly twenty-five years, until 1871, when he published *Lothair*, his most polished work, and perhaps the finest description we have of the English aristocracy. All the wit and brilliance of the earlier novels are there, but in a more masterly form. *Lothair* is the matured and experienced Disraeli,—the essential thought of the man of experience, who has seen the inside of the machinery of State, but whose romance, although not dead, has been taught to burn with a steady and dignified glow, rather than to flash its startling rays across the world. His last novel, *Endymion*, was published



ten years later. This is one of his lesser works, written, like *Henrietta Temple*, probably for the sake of the revenue it would bring. It was begun in 1874, but had to be put aside when its author took office, and it was then resumed at odd moments in a busy political life, and finished during the solitude of his closing years. Between the publication of *Tancred* and *Lothair* Disraeli's pen had not been idle. He published his life of *Lord George Bentinck* in 1851, and four volumes of political speeches.

In the early days of his career Disraeli had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, "a pretty little woman," he wrote, "a flirt and a rattle—indeed, gifted with a volubility, I should think, unequalled. She told me she liked silent, melancholy men. I answered that I had no doubt of it." Her husband was a man of great wealth and eventually his fellow-member for Maidstone. A friendship between the couple and Disraeli was formed which was deep and lasting. It was even more than an ordinary friendship, for when Mr. Wyndham Lewis died Disraeli married his widow. The marriage was an ill-assorted one so far as age was concerned,

for Disraeli was thirty-five and she was nearly fifty ; but this was no stumbling-block, in what proved from first to last a union of perfect happiness. His wife became his boon-fellow in the fullest sense. She was his helpmate, his confidante, and his adviser ; and the happiest moments in his life were spent in her company. She was rich also, which fact released Disraeli from his growing financial burdens and gave him that peace from financial stress which was so necessary to him now. There was something of the heroine in Mrs. Disraeli. She realised to the full the greatness of her husband's genius, and come what may she would serve him. This little incident will serve as an example of her devotion. One night, before an important debate, Mrs. Disraeli drove down to the House with her husband. At the beginning of the journey her finger got caught in the carriage door. She suffered great agony, but did not tell Disraeli for fear of upsetting him ; and her finger was not released from the door until he had left her. Such an example of devotion reveals the idyll of this marriage, and it is not to be wondered that when Queen Victoria offered Disraeli a

peerage, which he could not then accept, he asked the Queen to confer the honour upon his wife, who thus became Viscountess Beaconsfield. It was not until after her death that Disraeli accepted the title.

Shortly after his marriage he bought the beautiful manor of Hughenden, near his old home, Bradenham, with his share of the fortune which had come to him on the death of his father in 1848. Here he spent his happiest hours among the noble trees of the park, on the banks of the stream which runs near by, and among his horses and dogs ; and, above all, in the company of his wife. Whenever he could steal time from the activities of a parliamentary life, which demanded his energies, first as free-lance, then as Cabinet Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of his Party and afterwards Premier, he would go down to Hughenden, there to recuperate his strength for the fray. It was at Hughenden in his lonely old age that he would betake himself from the world to brood upon the romance of his career and the mystery of life. And, when he died on the 19th of April, 1881, his body was laid to rest beside that of

his wife in the little parish churchyard near the manor.

Benjamin Disraeli stands for personal distinction rather than national accomplishment in English politics. The dream of his life, in so far as it might have affected his countrymen, lies in his novels. He never succeeded in giving it any other existence. Indeed, after the first burst of youthful enthusiasm which gave the Young England party a name, he seems to have given up hope in the cause of his heart. Perhaps he despaired of his material, perhaps he loved immediate power so much that he was not prepared to risk the possible delays and defeats that always greet the advocate of a new political idea. All that we know is that Disraeli turned from the career, which was then open to him, of becoming a great social emancipator, a rebuilder of society, and became a politician. It may be that he saw the possible realisation of his dream in that direction, and only realised his error when it was too late. Perhaps the melancholy that overshadowed the inscrutable face of Disraeli in later years has its explanation in this.

The underlying idea of his life was the

translation of imagination into practical power. He is a part of that Romantic movement with which the eighteenth century closed and the nineteenth opened—the movement which has for its symbols Napoleon no less than Rousseau, Byron, Heine, and Shelley, as well as Ferdinand Lassalle and Benjamin Disraeli. All these romantic types find expression in the singular personality of Disraeli, and it is more than probable that his genius might have accomplished for England what his compatriot Lassalle began so brilliantly for Germany. His faith in imaginative power runs through all his novels, and his cleverest satires are criticisms of those great opponents of the imaginative faculty, rationalism and utilitarianism. “I think,” he says in *Contarini Fleming*, “that ere long science will become again imaginative, and that as we become more profound we may also become more credulous.” And again, in *Coningsby*, he says, “Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the imagination.” That is the keynote to his life, and for that idea his novels stand. They are not, like the

novels of the earlier masters, portrayals of character or analyses of feeling ; nor yet like the novels of Scott, impersonal romances ; but more allied to the poems of Byron, they are the expression of an intensely personal view of life, revealed through types and customs rather than characters and feelings. They are novels of ideas, the brilliant interpretations of human ambition in terms of the imagination.

## CHARLES DICKENS

WHEN Charles Dickens wrote and published the *Pickwick Papers* English literature was passing through one of those periods of depression which generally follow a great burst of activity. It would seem as though the creative force of an era grew in silence, every now and then throwing off some minor work to show that it was not extinct, until in the fullness of time it bursts into the majesty of complete expression, finds a voice to sing, an eye to see, and words to tell its meaning and its mystery. When Dickens was a child literature was somnolent. It was living but asleep, hibernating, as it were, pending the coming of that summer sun which should warm it into renewed growth and efflorescence.

The era of the great novelists was past, and the new prose romance had been silenced with



the death of Sir Walter. The renaissance of wonder had given place to a stony materialism, and Mr. Gradgrind was abroad in the land clouding the shining morning faces of the children with the grim gospel of fact. Personal romance had received a check with the death of Byron. Wordsworth had sung his best song ; and Keats, Shelley, and Coleridge, with their mysterious and subtle sense of beauty, were dead. Charles Lamb, with his genial insight into the romance of homely things, was no more ; but glimmerings of the new dawn, or rather the lingering rays of the old day, shone in the bizarre novels of Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton. All the rest was dark and still, save only for one ray of light, and that ray was perhaps the first intimation of the coming dawn. This came in the first flash of the fierce light of the genius of Carlyle, which was to go so far towards illuminating his own age and ages yet unborn. It took the form of a protest against Gradgrind and company, and the desolating materialism of the industrial era then at its most irresponsible and most rapacious stage. Of all the flames generated at this ray there was



CHARLES DICKENS

*From an engraving*



none brighter than that which shone through the works of Charles Dickens.

He was born on the 7th of February, 1812, at Landport, in Portsea, the second of the eight children of John Dickens, a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, employed in the Portsmouth Dock-yard. John Dickens and his wife were, to a great extent, an ineffective and incapable couple, drifting through life rather than guiding themselves with any confidence or certainty. But the haphazard of their lives did the world two services: one by giving it an incomparable genius, and the other in supplying that genius with the materials for one of his greatest, if not his very greatest, creations—Mr. and Mrs. Micawber.

When Charles was two years old the family left Portsea and went to live in London, remaining there for two years, and then moving on to Chatham. It is at this last place that we have our first picture of the young novelist as "a very queer, small boy," of delicate health and a quick imagination. He was fond of reading, and devoted to a lumber-room in the house, in which he found a collection of old books, in-

cluding copies of *Tom Jones*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Roderick Random*, *Humphry Clinker*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Don Quixote*, and *Gil Blas*, and in the fellowship of these great books, in the company of his peers, the child's education began. This education was continued afterwards, save for one or two interruptions at educational establishments, in the busy ways of life, in workshops, theatres, prisons, public offices, but mostly and at all times in the eternal highways and byways of London. Whilst at Chatham also, the young Dickens gained that knowledge and sympathy for the low-lying flats of Kent which spread outwards to the sea ; and, nearer home, of those rolling downs which nestle in their midst the quaint and beautiful city of Canterbury, and, nearer the river, Rochester : both places afterwards to become deeply associated with his works. But perhaps of more personal importance was the vision of an old house standing on a little hill between Rochester and Gravesend. It was called Gad's Hill Place, and the boy fell in love with its homely proportions and generous outlook over the Thames, and vowed to make the place his own when



THE HOUSE AT PORTSEA IN WHICH CHARLES DICKENS WAS BORN

*From a woodcut*





he grew up. The desire and the vow were fulfilled, for at the height of his fame Dickens bought Gad's Hill Place, and spent the last years of his life there.

The Dickens family seems to have enjoyed something like material comfort at Chatham, and little Charles spent some time at a day-school, where he made a favourable impression on the master, who presented him, on leaving the school, with a copy of Goldsmith's *Bee*. But the pleasant days at Chatham were not to last. Misfortune dogged the family's footsteps, and a move to London was made when Charles was about ten years old. A house was taken in the dingy region of Gower Street North, and there John Dickens attempted to retrieve his fallen fortunes, aided by his faithful wife, who, like Mrs. Micawber, caused a brass plate with the legend, *Mrs. Dickens's Establishment*, to be placed on the door, in the vain hope of gaining something by instructing the youth of the district. But in spite of the fact that, in addition to this alluring plate, little Charles further advertised the advantages of the educational establishment by handbill, there is no record

of any scholars being placed under Mrs. Dickens's care. Matters went from bad to worse, the house was besieged by duns, and in the end John Dickens was arrested for debt and placed in the Marshalsea Prison.

The next few months were a period of bitter anguish for the sensitive boy. His mother and the family continued at the desolate house in Gower Street North, now denuded of furniture save for the mere necessities which were left by the bailiffs, among which his family "still encamped, with a young servant girl from Chatham workhouse, in the two parlours in the emptied house," where Charles played the part of domestic help for a while, running messages and doing other such services. Then the brilliant idea of sending him to earn his living occurred to his mother. A family connection named James Lamert owned a dirty and rickety blacking factory near Hungerford Market, and into his service at the salary of six shillings a week the lad went. He worked in a cellar tying up and labelling blacking pots. This employment filled the boy with horror and disgust, and left a morbid impression on his

mind which he never overcame. "My whole nature was so penetrated with grief and humiliation," he wrote in after years,

that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man, and wander desolately back to that time of my life.

Many children, more at that period than now, were used to a far worse lot than this, but long generations of drudgery had dulled their susceptibilities, and their narrow, dark lives never became conscious of the waste and degradation of it all. With Dickens it was otherwise; the sensitiveness of a nature which responded so readily to the pains and trials of humanity, was shocked to its very foundations by the indignity of this child slavery, and in *David Copperfield* he gave a voice to the sordid tragedy.

Misfortune had not yet done with his family, for in a little while the hungry creditors of John Dickens swooped down upon the remnants of the household in Gower Street North and carried away the few pitiable remains of the home. There was nothing left now but for Mrs.

Dickens and the children to join the head of the family in the Marshalsea. Little Charles was sent to lodge with a lady of "reduced" circumstances, afterwards to become famous as Mrs. Pipchin of *Dombey and Son*, in Camden Town, going from there to his hated work during the week and spending his Sundays with his family in the debtors' prison. The lonely yet varied experiences of this time went far towards forming his character. Living from hand-to-mouth, dependent entirely on himself, and for the greater part of his time either alone or in the deeper loneliness of the uncongenial blacking factory, the boy's life was thrown entirely upon his own responsibility. And thus developed that peculiarly rich inner life, which formed the basis of so many masterpieces of fiction in days to come, and that self-reliance and masterfulness which marked his whole nature. ✧ The impressions of this period are fully set forth in the early pages of *David Copperfield*, for although that great novel must not be taken as a literal record of his life, its earlier chapters, particularly in their emotional passages, are autobiographical: an interpretation of the sensations

and imaginative life of the author's boyhood. Such a passage as the following, and there are many more in the same key, is practically a reminiscence of this period ; the only alterations necessary to change fiction into fact being to read for "Murdstone and Grinby's," Lamert's Blacking Factory, and for Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, Mr. and Mrs. Dickens :—

All this time I was working at Murdstone and Grinby's in the same common way, and with the same common companions, and with the same sense of unmerited degradation as at first. But I never, happily for me no doubt, made a single acquaintance, or spoke to any of the many boys whom I saw daily in going to the warehouse, in coming from it, and in prowling about the streets at meal times. I led the same secretly unhappy life ; but I led it in the same lonely, self-reliant manner. The only changes I am conscious of are, firstly, that I had grown more shabby, and, secondly, that I was now relieved of much of the weight of Mr. and Mrs. Micawber's cares ; for some relatives or friends had engaged to help them at their present pass, and they lived more comfortably in the prison than they had lived for a long while out of it. I used to breakfast with them now, in virtue of some arrangement, of which I have forgotten the details. I forget, too, at what hour the gates were opened in the morning, admitting of my going in ; but I know

that I was often up at six o'clock, and that my favourite lounging-place in the interval was old London Bridge, where I was wont to sit in one of the stone recesses watching the people going by, or to look over the balustrades at the sun shining in the water, and lighting up the golden flame on the top of the Monument.

That the boy was able to breakfast at the Marshalsea was due to his having removed from the lodging in Camden Town to an attic in Lant Street, Borough, quite close to the prison, and afterwards to serve as the abiding-place of Bob Sawyer, and the scene of the famous bachelor's party, whose disastrous climax was so disconcerting to the innocent Mr. Pickwick.

If a man wish to abstract himself from the world—to remove himself from within the reach of temptation—to place himself beyond the possibility of any inducement to look out of the window—he should by all means go to Lant Street.

So wrote Dickens in *Pickwick*, and in this charming street he spent many of his boyhood's hours. His father was on the whole better off in the Marshalsea than he had been for many years. He was a discursive man of much informa-

tion, with a large, but not offensively, pompous manner, and this gave him a kind of standing among the inmates of the prison. But his incarceration was of short duration, for the inheritance of a small legacy set him free in a few months, and in the early days of 1824 he went with his family to live at Camden Town. A quarrel with Lamert at about this time was the cause of Charles being discharged from his employment; his mother wished to make peace and let Charles go back to the hated work, a thoughtlessness he could never afterwards overlook, but the will of John Dickens prevailed, and the boy was sent to a school in Mornington Place, Hampstead Road, bearing the high-sounding title of *Wellington House Academy*. The master of the academy was an ignoramus and a petty tyrant, and Dickens does not seem to have benefited much by his teaching. He was at another school in Brunswick Square after this; and in May, 1827, at the age of fifteen years, he entered a solicitor's office in Gray's Inn at a salary of thirteen shillings and sixpence per week. But previous to this he had had a short experience of



office life in another solicitor's employment in New Court, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

For the next six years Dickens was employed in the law in various capacities, and later as a press reporter. The latter had come about through his father, who was now making a living in this way. Dickens threw himself into his profession with great energy, thoroughly mastering Gurney's system of shorthand, and becoming one of the most expert reporters of his day. He was engaged as reporter at various times on such papers as *The True Sun*, *The Mirror of Parliament*, and *The Morning Chronicle*, and thus began his first connection with letters which was in a very few years to make him the best-known and best-beloved of his country's writers. Dickens was now earning some five guineas a week, and he had turned his back on poverty for ever. His first actual literary production was written in 1833, when he was twenty-one years old. It was called *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*, and was published in *The Old Monthly Magazine* on January 1st, 1834, and afterwards, under the changed title of *Mr. Minns and his Cousin*, formed one of the *Sketches by Boz*.

Dickens tells, in the preface to the *Pickwick Papers*, how this first effusion,

dropped stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box, in a dark office, up a dark court in Fleet Street—appeared in all the glory of print;

and how

I walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride, that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there.

But with the publication of this sketch, the days of fear and trembling were at an end. The editor of *The Old Monthly Magazine* was glad enough to print more of the young man's sketches, albeit it appears that he was not anxious to pay for them; anyhow, Dickens did not receive any remuneration for his imaginative work until his gift for writing humorous studies of life came to the notice of the editor of *The Morning Chronicle*, on which journal he was now fully occupied as a reporter. He was thereupon invited to contribute a weekly sketch to its columns, for which his salary was

raised from five to seven guineas a week. These articles were collected and published in two volumes, illustrated by George Cruikshank, in 1836, under the title *Sketches by Boz*. The name Boz was his signature in *The Morning Chronicle*, it was originally the nickname of a younger brother, whom Dickens had called Moses in honour of the Vicar of Wakefield, a name which was facetiously pronounced through the nose as Boses, and this in time was shortened to Boz.

In the same year *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* made their appearance. They were published in monthly parts, starting in April, 1836. Dickens had by this time left the parental roof and was living in chambers in Furnival's Inn. Like the origin of so many of our great novels, the origin of *Pickwick* had in it a fortuitous element. Messrs. Chapman and Hall, the publishers, having scented new talent in the *Sketches by Boz*, approached the young author in his rooms at Furnival's Inn with a proposal that he should write the text of a series of sporting sketches which were to be drawn by the artist Seymour. The idea was

that of a Nimrod Club, in which various people were to go fishing, shooting, hunting and so forth, the incidents to be treated humorously, and to be published in monthly parts. Dickens overruled the sporting idea, and got permission to take his own way "with a free range of English scenes and people." And so *Pickwick* was begun, not as a series of sketches written to illustrate pictures, but as a continuous series of prose sketches illustrated afterwards by drawings. Seymour invented the well-known picture of Mr. Pickwick from a description supplied by Mr. Chapman of the dress and bearing of a real personage he had seen. But before many numbers had appeared Seymour died by his own hand, and the pictorial part of the work was handed over to R. W. Buss, and later, to Hablot K. Browne ("Phiz"), whose association with Dickens as illustrator was long and memorable.

*Pickwick* was not an instantaneous success, and at one point the publishers were so disheartened that they were ready to throw up the venture. But just when their faith in the thing was at its lowest, Sam Weller appeared, and the *Pickwick Papers* burst into sudden and immense

popularity. Only four hundred copies of the first part were ordered from the binders, but with Part XV the order had risen to forty thousand. Charles Dickens, at the age of twenty-four, became in a few weeks the most talked-about writer of the day, and *Pickwick* the most widely read book. He had sounded a new note in literature, and with a stroke of the pen almost made a new era for the novel. He did even more than this, he made fiction a thoroughly democratic and popular art, without degrading it. His robust humour and genial satire found their way to all hearts, and the vivid creatures of his fancy at once took up their places as common objects of the imagination of the whole nation. Everybody read and everybody enjoyed *Pickwick*.

The price Messrs. Chapman and Hall originally agreed to pay Dickens for the *Pickwick Papers* was £14 per month; this sum was afterwards increased to £15, but as the success of the venture increased further cheques were sent to him, and when the monthly instalments had finished he had made out of it between two thousand five hundred and three thousand pounds. This Dickens considered inadequate

payment, and in the light of the fact that the publishers made something like twenty thousand pounds out of the book, a book by the way which they were at one time on the point of abandoning, the proportion of payment does not strike one as altogether fair. However, Dickens won something of more value than mere money : he won the hearts of the people, and from henceforth the world of letters was his and he could dictate his terms.

Just before *Pickwick* was published he had become engaged to Miss Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of one of his colleagues on the *Morning Chronicle*, and they were married on the 2nd of April, 1836. Dickens took his wife to live at his rooms in Furnival's Inn, and there his first child, a boy, was born in January, 1837. In the following March they removed to 48 Doughty Street, where the first sorrow of his manhood came upon him in the death of a beloved sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, at the age of seventeen. He felt this blow so deeply that for a while he could not work, and the publication of *Pickwick* was delayed a month in consequence.

At the end of 1839 another removal took

them to 1 Devonshire Terrace, Regent's Park. In Doughty Street and Devonshire Terrace, Dickens enjoyed the first flush of his new fame, and in these places he gathered around him that brilliant circle of friends from among the leading writers, actors, and artists of his day. Always a self-confident and commanding personality, his great success had given a spur to his assertiveness, but the good-humour and genial spirits of the young writer never permitted this proper self-appreciation to become mere arrogance. He abounded with vitality and sympathy, and he was the life and soul of all gatherings. He was, moreover, a handsome man, slight of frame, with clear-cut features, long, wavy, dark hair, and full blue eyes, and he loved to affect the dandified pose of the young men of the time, who, clad in gorgeous waistcoats and amazing stocks, would peacock themselves as splendidly as the Brummells and Nashes of an earlier period. Carlyle has left a well-known pen-picture of the novelist at this time, which will, however, bear quoting again :—

- ° He is a fine little fellow—Boz, I think. Clear, blue, intelligent eyes, eyebrows that he arches



amazingly, large, protrusive, rather loose mouth, a face of most extreme *mobility*, which he shuttles about—eyebrows, eyes, mouth and all—in a very singular manner while speaking. Surmount this with a loose coil of common-coloured hair, and set it on a small compact figure, very small, and dressed à la D'Orsay rather than well—this is Pickwick. For the rest a quiet, shrewd-looking little fellow, who seems to guess pretty well what he is and what others are.

From now onward the life of Charles Dickens was a pageant of unique work, fine friendships, public acclamation, and rich rewards. Rarely has a life been lived that has been at once so successful, so useful, and so active. During the time *Pickwick* was appearing he did not rest upon his oars and take the breathing-space his success may have earned for him ; on the contrary, he turned to his work with redoubled energy ; in the next four years he wrote a farce for the St. James's Theatre called *The Strange Gentleman*, and the libretto of a comic opera called *The Village Coquettes*, which was set to music by Hullah ; a tract on Sabbatarianism called *Sunday under Three Heads* ; and two full-sized novels, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. Besides this he edited *Bentley's Miscellany*, in

which magazine *Oliver Twist* first appeared. He produced so much that the *Quarterly Review* uttered a solemn warning that he would exhaust his powers of invention if he went on at that rate. Dickens's reply was to produce three more masterpieces in the next four years, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840); *Barnaby Rudge* (1841); and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843). Besides these, he found time to visit America in 1842, and to write a book about it, which he published under the title of *American Notes* in the same year; and as a parting shot to the pessimists he threw off *A Christmas Carol*, the finest of his Christmas stories, in 1843. And even then he had not reached the full limit of his powers, nor even had he come to the full expression of his insatiable energy.

In spite of all this work there had been ample time for play and for the festivities and receptions which were the incidentals of his growing fame. He made trips to various parts of the country, Stratford-on-Avon, North Wales, Yorkshire, Brighton, Broadstairs, and abroad to Belgium. There had been a notable visit to Edinburgh in 1841, when he was fêted like a

monarch. And the journey in America with his wife, when he visited Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Niagara, was one long triumphant procession. With the return to England came more work. But with the publication of *Martin Chuzzlewit* there was a set-back in his run of popularity. The separate parts of *Pickwick* and *Nicholas Nickleby* had reached a circulation of forty and fifty thousand copies, *Martin Chuzzlewit* only reached some twenty odd thousand in its most popular parts. Dickens's expenses had been going up, and he looked forward to making more money out of his latest book, and, being disappointed in this, he determined to leave England for a while and live economically on the Continent.

In July, 1844, Dickens and his wife and five children, Miss Georgina Hogarth, his sister-in-law, who now lived with them, and their servants, left England, and journeyed in coach stages by way of Boulogne and Marseilles, and from thence by steamer to Genoa. There he got to work on the second of his Christmas books, *The Chimes*, a book in which he made one of his numerous appeals for the poor and

the down-trodden, and which cost him so much emotional anguish that when it was done he indulged in what women call "a good cry." Throughout his stay he had had several fits of home-sickness, for in spite of the interest and beauty of his surroundings, he pined for those London streets in whose busy life he lived most freely and most happily. Nothing would satisfy him but a hurried journey to London, where he gave that memorable reading of *The Chimes* to a circle of intimate friends, including Carlyle, Douglas Jerrold, Maclise, Laman Blanchard, and Forster, at the latter's house ; and then back to Italy, which he finally left again for London in June, 1845. In this year he started the *Daily News*, and was appointed editor with a salary of £2000 a year. But daily editorial work was evidently not to his liking, for he only retained the post for three weeks. To the *News* he contributed his *Pictures from Italy*, published in a volume in 1846.

In the same year he was abroad again in Switzerland and Paris writing *Dombey and Son*, which was published in 1848, and with it came a return of his first popularity. But he could



CHARLES DICKENS READING "THE CHIMES" AT 58, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,  
ON THE 2ND OF DECEMBER, 1844  
*After Maclise*



not rest abroad for long, he found the difficulty of working "without the magic lantern" of the London streets "immense." When in England he did not remain all the time in London, but took part in private theatricals, he being an excellent actor, and demands were now being made upon him as a public speaker; both of these activities took him to various parts of the country. In 1848 he published *The Haunted Man*, and between May, 1849, and the autumn of 1850, *David Copperfield*, in many ways his masterpiece, appeared in monthly parts. During this period his demon of energy forced him to go into journalism once more. His earlier attempts, *Bentley's Miscellany*, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, and the *Daily News* had not been very promising, but Charles Dickens was dauntless, and he launched *Household Words* in March, 1850. This proved a success. He managed to hit the taste of the average English home to which his novels made so profound an appeal, and *Household Words*, incorporated with *All the Year Round* in 1859, became a valuable property for the rest of his life. In its pages appeared *The Child's History of England*, *The Uncommercial*



*Traveller*, *Hard Times*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, and *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*. Besides his own contributions many of the best writers of the time wrote for the paper, and during its life he published stories by Charles Reade, Lord Lytton, Mrs. Gaskell, and Wilkie Collins.

In the year 1851 Dickens left Devonshire Terrace, and took Tavistock House in Tavistock Square. This year was an unlucky one for him, for besides the serious illness of his wife, he lost his father and an infant daughter. He commenced *Bleak House* at about this time, and published it in 1852. Then the great strain which his many activities made upon him began to pull him down, and he had to rest. He took his family over to Boulogne and was charmed with the old seaport, remaining there until the following year, when he, Wilkie Collins, and the artist Augustus Egg, went for a tour in Switzerland and Italy. It was on his return to England, just after Christmas, that he gave his first public reading; this occurred at Birmingham on December 27th. He knew his power as a reader, and the success of his private readings



CHARLES DICKENS AT A PUBLIC READING

*From a woodcut*



to his friends had long since suggested a public appearance in this capacity. Dickens saw money in it, and had asked his friend John Forster whether his public appearance as a professional reader would be *infra dig*. Forster thought it would be, and this opinion no doubt influenced the novelist for a while. But his combined love of publicity and money ultimately triumphed, and after the tremendous success of the Birmingham series, which was in the aid of charity, it was only a matter of time before Dickens would actually take to the platform as a regular reader. This really came about on the 29th of April, 1858, at St. Martin's Hall, London, when he made his first appearance as a professional reader of his own works. As he imagined, the venture was a tremendous success, and although it undermined his health and without doubt killed him before his time, his faith that there was "money in it" proved true, for he realised by these readings the large sum of £45,000.

His study of human conditions under the heel of modern capitalism, *Hard Times*, was completed in 1854, and next year he commenced publishing *Little Dorrit*. There was a long break

in his productiveness after this, and it was not until 1859 that his next novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, was issued. In the meantime Dickens's life had been as full as ever—lecturing, reading, and editing. But with all this activity he found time for his friendships, the most notable of which were those with Forster, his biographer, and Macready, the actor ; and his children record that this busy life did not deter him from interesting himself in their little affairs. But a cloud overhung the dazzling life of the great novelist, that blackest of all clouds, the cloud of domestic strife. It was evident to his intimate friends that he and his wife were not “made for one another,” and the continued friction came to a crisis in 1858 when, after living together for over twenty years, they parted. His eldest son went with the mother, whom he allowed £600 a year ; the other children remaining with Dickens and under the care of his sister-in-law Miss Georgina Hogarth, who remained his closest friend to the last.

As long before this as 1856 he had realised his boyish ambition and bought Gad's Hill Place, and in 1860 he sold Tavistock House and went

to live at Gad's Hill for the rest of his life. *Great Expectations* was published the year after he went there, and then he got to work on *Our Mutual Friend*, which, however, was not published until 1864. His readings were taking up more and more of his time, and in spite of doctors' warnings, he went on. In 1867 he visited America again, and the bitter trouncing he had given the Americans after his first visit being overlooked, he was received with unbounded enthusiasm, and his readings were more than successful. During this trying journey his health gradually grew worse, sleeplessness set in, and his old desire to write was absent. But in spite of all this, on his return to England he entered into further reading contracts, until his health grew so bad that the readings had to be abandoned, and he went back to Gad's Hill Place and his old imaginative work. At his beautiful home he was happy with his children and his dogs and his garden, in which was a small Swiss chalet where he did his work. He delighted in carrying out improvements, and practically rebuilt the house and remodelled its surroundings during the ten years

of his residence there. In the autumn of 1869 he commenced writing what was to be his last work, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. He started this in good spirits and amidst the joy of his family at having him back again after his reading tours, and there was added happiness in memory of the fact that he had sold the copyright of the book for £7500 and a half-share of the profits after a sale of twenty-five thousand copies, as well as £1000 for the advance sheets sent to America. The book was being published in monthly instalments as it was written. But this happiness was not to last ; the great strain of the last few years had worn him out, although his indomitable will was as strong as ever—but not strong enough to conquer death, for on the 8th of June he had a seizure from which he never recovered, and he died the following day, June 9th, 1870.

No other writer comes so near to the national heart as Charles Dickens. His death was treated as a national calamity, and his remains were laid in the most sacred and most honoured place in the land, the Abbey of Westminster, and to this day flowers and evergreens, and holly at the Yule Tide





CHARLES DICKENS'S GRAVE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

*From an engraving after S. L. Fildes*



he did so much to make again a living festival, are placed upon his grave. For three parts of a century he had served England instead of a poet, taking the place of a Burns, where a Burns was not, and of a traditional folk-muse where the ballads of the countryside were no more. Even to-day, over thirty years after his death, the charm of his books, in spite of many prognostications to the contrary, has not been worn away by the passing years. His books are still the happy reading of innumerable people wherever the English language is spoken. Here and there, it is true, certain of the moods and aspirations of the middle nineteenth century seem archaic to modern readers. We are impatient with the persistent melancholy of Paul Dombey for instance, or with the equally insistent optimism of Esther Summerson ; but when all allowance has been made for the peculiar and exuberant sentiment of such types, Dickens is as quick to-day as ever he was. He is still our supreme master of laughter and tears, the genius of a lamp that shines for all.

He was to the townsmen of his day (and of our day), in a very real sense, what the ballad

singer was to the peasantry of the past. He provided a medium for that community of feeling which is the great need of social life. He wrote for a people who had been separated from their traditions by the great change which the industrial era had brought about, and who were beginning to realise that they were no longer peasants and craftsmen, but citizens and workers. Charles Dickens was the first writer to interpret the moods and sentiments of this new race; he gave articulation to their aspirations, and found a local habitation and a name for their antipathies. And he did this in a new way. His method was in many ways that of all the great novelists; indeed, it was in the school of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, that he learnt his craft; but to their imagination and humour, to their observation and skill in the use of words, he added a genial note which was hitherto unknown in letters, and which came like a revelation to a people who had been offered nothing for their forgotten ballads but the distant literature of the study or the ribald stories of the gutter. Dickens was one of themselves, and he wrote with a fine sympathy and a first-hand knowledge of their

habits. He did not write of them as though they were a different species, and he did not write at them as though they were unclean. He wrote for them and, as it were, with them, and this was the secret of more than half his power over the emotions of his fellow-men.

The personality of Charles Dickens was in itself attractive, and would have made an irresistible appeal in any walk of life. He had a magnetism which affected all, and contributed much to the success of those readings in which he gave to the public more than he could spare even of his abounding vitality. His nature was dramatic, and he had the rare gift of public effectiveness ; his readings gave scope to the play of this gift, they became in his hands not so much public readings as dramatic recitals, as unique in their way as were his novels. His dramatic sense is noticeable throughout the novels, in his entirely unnecessary and often damaging insistence upon plot, and in his trick of accounting severally for his characters at the end of his story, like the grouping and disposition of the actors in the last act of a play. And here and there, in every one of his books, there are

passages and incidents which are more fitted for melodrama than for narrative fiction.

His method as a writer was to reproduce the familiar moods of daily life and the homely ways of the people by a quaint symbolism, half humour and half a rare power of catching certain whimsies of appearance and manner which most people see, but only genius observes. The result of this is that, in spite of the unique qualities of his characters, each one is a familiar personage, indeed, a revelation of familiarity, in a more familiar and more memorable form than it had ever had before. The whole effect is steeped in the warm light of his own genial personality—a personality which always strikes one as being dominant, yet kind ; tolerant to a degree, yet fiercely indignant of injustice and tyranny. This large good-humour makes his fictions irresistible at their best, and even tolerable at their worst. For in this last few authors have survived so many real defects, defects of verbosity, due to his period ; of exuberance, due to his own immense vitality ; of irregularity, due to the serial form in which the novels generally appeared ; but in spite of all, his per-

sonal genius alone makes us overlook such blemishes, and no writer before has ever inspired his admirers to declare that his faults are more tolerable than the virtues of others, with such genuine earnestness.

Dickens, being a child of that lower middle class which is poor but respectable, knew best the ins and outs of the lives of those people who have neither the satisfaction nor the peace that follows the abandonment of all social ties. He was the first novelist to interpret the lives of the impecunious as distinguished from the poor; one might almost say that he discovered the average person. No previous writer had seen fit to do more than make the common people the supernumeraries of his arrangements: backgrounds and foils for the dignified and pompous doings of his principal people. Charles Dickens would have been impossible before the French Revolution, and, coming after it as he did, at a time when the common people were acquiring a new and distinct consciousness, he took the opportunity of giving them their true perspective in literature.

Dickens is a great novelist, not because he



wrote perfect novels, for with one possible exception, *Great Expectations*, his novels are not excellent from the point of view of construction. His gift was characterisation, and his mode was the picaresque novel, and when he kept to that form, as he did by sheer accident of publication, in *Pickwick*, he produced a masterpiece. But he risked sacrificing every other novel he wrote on the altar of plot, and if there was one faculty outside the genius of Dickens it was that easy trick of plot construction. His novels are rarely remembered for their stories, but for their atmosphere and characters. The works of Dickens fill the mind like one gigantic novel.

He excels in the personalisation of quaint objects and the characterisation of odd persons. He drew with an unerring pen the flotsam and jetsam of our cities, and the peculiar and the whimsical were his special province. His method is a kind of interpretation, through idiosyncrasy : by means of a mental kink as in *Miss Flight*, an uncommon touch of humour or language as in *Sam Weller* and *Alfred Jingle*, a peculiarity of garment as in *Mr. Mantalini*,

or in most instances by a certain note in the personal appearance, as in those unique descriptions which introduce each of his people to the reader. This method reaches its height in those masterly creations, Mrs. Gamp, Mr. Micawber, and Mr. Pickwick, who must always rank with the greatest characters of literature, with Sancho Panza, Falstaff, and Gargantua.

This interpretative power is not confined to peculiar people, but to peculiar places—he makes every gable or odd nook, every disfigurement or strangeness in a place or building, render tribute. His pictures are not gorgeously detailed like the almost pre-Raphaelite work of Balzac, nor have they the hardness of the realistic massing of facts which distinguishes Zola—but whilst being full of detail they always give the impression of some distinct and dominating attribute, which forms a keynote to the whole. He seems to permeate inanimate things with the personalities of his characters, and to give them a sub-conscious existence closely associated with the psychology of the story. One remembers many such descriptions—that of the old Maypole Inn in *Barnaby Rudge*,

of the wood and Jonas Chuzzlewit after the murder of Montague Tigg, and of the marsh country of Pip's childhood in *Great Expectations*.

But it is in London and its surroundings that Dickens is most at home. The London that is fast disappearing will live for ever in his books. His work is the epic of London, and all phases of its vast and complex life are revealed in his pages. The London of the rich, and the London of the poor; of the railway and the diligence; in peace and war; London cruel and London kind; her humours and horrors, hardships and merrymakings, were all known to him, and her incessant roar was a siren-song ever calling him back to her and holding him enthralled. Few have known London and her many moods and tenses better; and no one has depicted her so well. No part was foreign to Charles Dickens, whether it was comfortable Bloomsbury with its great quadrangles, or the pinched and squalid Borough; the Temple with its surprising silences; cosmopolitan Soho and the Seven Dials; Petticoat Lane or Cadogan Square, it was all the same to him. All the odd corners and remote places,

pleasant and unpleasant, were familiar—grimy little graveyards hedged in with warehouses or theatres ; fœtid slums, riverside dens of infamy, and the places of commerce or pleasure or crime. All these things live in his great prose epic of London, the Iliad of the workaday world.

The humanitarian side of Dickens's character is never very far away from his work. He is often more humanist than artist, so that to-day there are great patches in his work which, robbed of their purpose by having effected it or by reason of its having shifted its position, are to all but the enthusiast arid wastes. Although many of his propagandist passages must always retain their interest and their intrinsic value as art—Charles Dickens is most effective when he denounces with laughter, for his pathos is often strained, especially when it is deliberately purposeful. One is reminded of Jo, the crossing-sweeper, who "never knowed nuthink," and for whose sad lot Dickens strives to excite our sympathy by giving the urchin the psychology of an ill-used puritan who is doleful at his lack of knowledge and friends.

Now, any one who knows the slum-dweller knows that the most horrible thing about him is that he is fairly happy in his squalor, and that when he wails about his lot his wailing has a decidedly commercial objective, such, for instance, as extracting half-crowns from the pockets of kind-hearted old gentlemen like Mr. Snagsby. In such instances Dickens spoils his case by protesting over much; poor Jo in *Bleak House* lacks the touch of comedy which makes the Artful Dodger immortal in the pages of *Oliver Twist*.

But Dickens generally overdoes his pathetic passages, whether propagandist or otherwise; he sheds too many tears. There is something that cloyes in his descriptions of Little Nell and Paul Dombey. The pathos is laid on with a trowel to such an extent that one would require torrential tears to do it justice. But this is not entirely the fault of the novelist, but rather that of his age; the middle part of the nineteenth century demanded emotional excesses, and Dickens was decidedly a man of his period, which is one of the reasons of his instantaneous success. In much the same way he overdoes his

descriptions of normal people ; he makes normal goodness too good and normal badness too bad. This is evident in his treatment of women. His successes are his eccentric and peculiar characters—Mrs. Gamp, the chaste and beautiful Miggs, 'Guster and the Marchioness, and many more. His failures fail in realities, because they are not real women, but the personifications of the popular conception of what a woman should or should not be. Dickens's desirable women are docile and angelic, as the second Mrs. Copperfield and Esther Summerson ; the undesirable are shrews and termagants, as Mrs. Varden and others. But among his normal types of women, there is at least one who is drawn with masterly skill ; that is Mrs. Joe Gargery, who is but one figure in a book of masterpieces.

These are but the defects of the quality that produced his best works. Defects of a personality that knew no bounds to its interest in the doings of men and women, nor to its desire for their happiness, as it whipped hypocrisy and injustice with laughter and satire, and shed tears for the incapable, the outcast, and the oppressed. For Charles Dickens loved his fellows, even to de-

ferring to their judgment ; in fact, he trusted them. This is a rare thing in a great artist, but Dickens was a great artist because of this large sympathy, and it is to be noted that he is at his best where his sympathy is most profound, and this always occurs when he deals with the least fortunate of human beings. He glorifies the ne'er-do-weel and the mountebank ; he expends his greatest power of imaginative sympathy upon the impecunious and the backwash of civilisation, and puts a halo round the brow of the maid-of-all-work.



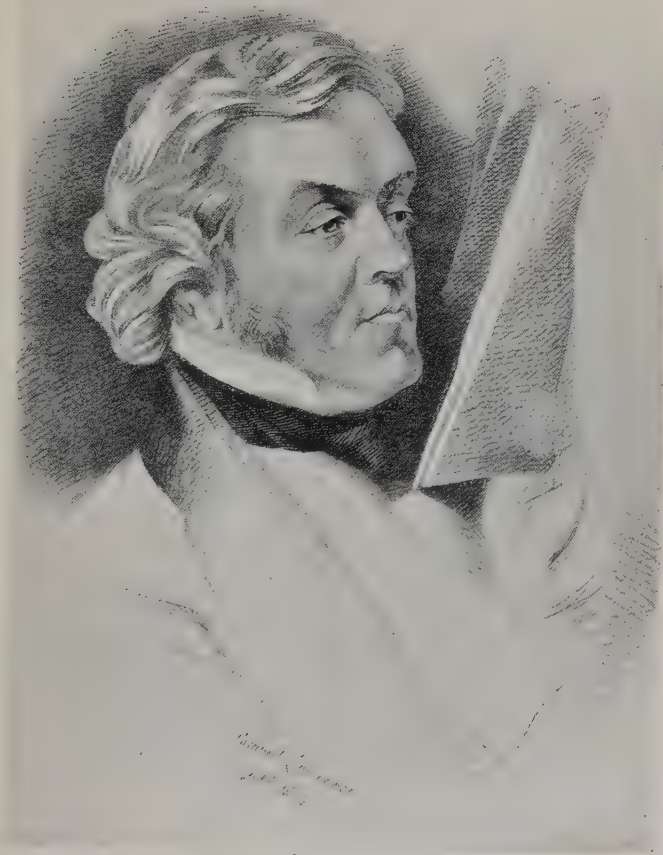
## THACKERAY

### WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

was born a year before Charles Dickens, but he was an unknown and struggling writer when the *Pickwick Papers* were at the height of their popularity, and he continued thus whilst Dickens was adding to his laurels with *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Then he began to make a select public to whom he was known for his humour and satire, but no novel had fallen from his pen. In the meanwhile Dickens had proceeded along his triumphant way, and, with the publication of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Dombey and Son*, it may be fairly said that he had placed himself among the novelists. All this time Thackeray felt that Dickens was his rival, yet no rivalry had begun ; he knew he was a novelist, but he had written no novel. And when he did write *Vanity Fair* he found the publishers in no hurry to entertain

that great work, and it was eventually issued by Messrs. Bradbury and Evans on the strength of his reputation as a contributor to *Punch*. This occurred in 1847-8. *Vanity Fair* was a success, however, and Thackeray found himself famous at the age of thirty-seven years.

Since Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray were the rival great novelists of their day, and since out of all the fiction writers of that productive age their two names have been handed down, bracketed together in dual supremacy, over all their contemporaries in the art of the novel, and so placed together among the masters of the craft, it is no easy matter to approach one of them without some sort of comparison with the other. But although their names stand together their works are as diverse as their personalities. The main matter for consideration is the difference of reception accorded to their novels by their contemporaries. This was largely a matter of personal effect and only in a secondary sense due to the actual books. Dickens was one of those inevitable persons who conquer by the simple act of being. He pervaded his novels, and after-



W. M. THACKERAY

*From the engraving after Samuel Lawrence*



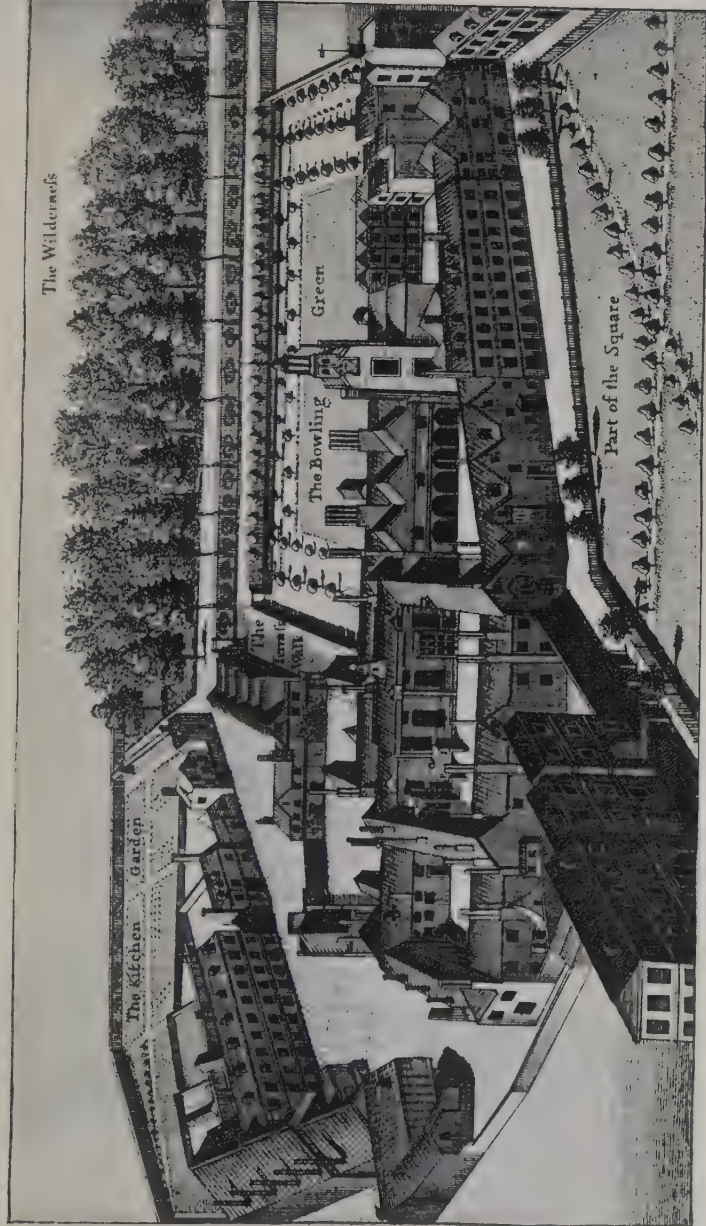
wards his generation, like a genial spirit, compelling all who came within its far-reaching sphere to fall down and worship. He was the embodiment of an energetic good-humour and self-confidence which were contagious in the highest degree, infecting everybody with a kind of happy strength. He made people feel pleased with themselves and with each other.

Thackeray lacked this abounding geniality. His attitude towards life was that of a critic. He was genial, and generous of himself also, but his appeal was to the few rather than to the many. He lacked the Dickensian faculty of making himself appear to be the personal friend of all the world. Yet in his own circle his friendships were many and lasting. His humour ran too often into wit and cynicism, and this is not the way to make people feel pleased with themselves. But deeper than all this there was always about him a feeling that his wit and his satire were but the cloaks of a heart that was sad and a self-confidence that wavered. And this was true. Thackeray never laughed with his whole being as Dickens did, and he never had so invincible a belief in his own powers. He

doubted himself and, to a greater extent, he doubted humanity. The average man is so conscious in his heart of his own limitations that he hates doubt of all kinds. Dickens never doubted either himself or mankind, indeed, as to the former, did he not call himself "inimitable"? The people took him at his word; and they were right.

In considering the personality of Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, who knew him intimately, speaks of this feature in his character: "He was not a man," he says,

capable of feeling at any time quite assured in his position, and when that occurred he was very far from assurance. I think that at no time did he doubt the sufficiency of his own mental qualification for the work he had taken in hand; but he doubted all else. He doubted the appreciation of the world; he doubted his fitness for turning his intellect to valuable account; he doubted his physical capacity,—dreading his own lack of industry; he doubted his luck; he doubted the continual absence of some of those misfortunes on which the works of literary men are shipwrecked. Though he was aware of his own power, he always, to the last, was afraid that his own deficiencies should be too strong against him. It was his nature to be idle,—to put off his work,—and then to be angry



The Wilderness

The Kitchen Garden

The  
Terrace

The Bowling

Green

Part of the Square

THE CHARTER HOUSE  
*From an engraving*





with himself for putting it off. Ginger was hot in the mouth with him, and all the allurements of the world were strong upon him. To find on Monday morning an excuse why he should not on Monday do Monday's work was, at the time, an inexpressible relief to him, but had become a deep regret,—almost a remorse,—before the Monday was over. To such a one it was not given to believe in himself with that sturdy rock-bound foundation which we see to have belonged to some men from the earliest struggles of their career.

William Makepeace Thackeray was the only child of Richmond Thackeray, an Indian Civil Servant, the son of W. M. Thackeray, of Hadley, near Barnet, in Middlesex. He was born at Calcutta on the 18th of July, 1811, and was brought to England as a child and sent to the Charterhouse School. At the age of eighteen he went to Cambridge, where he remained only one year, giving up the studious life, and dashing the parental hope that he would be called to the Bar, by going to Weimar, and later to Paris, with the purpose of studying for the career of an artist. It was there that he picked up what little knowledge of drawing he ever attained ; a limitation which did not prevent him

becoming, if one of the least exact, one of the most vivid and delightful of illustrators. In 1832 he came into an inheritance of some five hundred pounds a year, a fortune which he eventually lost in speculation and at cards.

One of his earliest ventures was the financing of two newspapers, *The National Standard* and *The Constitutional*, both of which came to grief, and Thackeray having by this time exhausted his resources, had to turn round for some other means of livelihood. He had a gift of ready verse-making, which had found expression during his brief life at Cambridge, where he had contributed some satirical verses to an undergraduates' magazine called *The Snob*, on the occasion of the contest for the prize poem of the year, when the subject was *Timbuctoo*, and the prize was carried off, as every one knows, by Tennyson. He commenced his literary career by taking up this dropped thread of burlesque verse, and contributed to several magazines, none of which were of any note except *The Times*, for which he did a little work, and *Fraser's Magazine*, upon whose staff he found regular employment, and to whose columns he contributed *The Yellow Plush Papers*

in 1835, and *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond* in 1837-8, and many other works. The earlier papers were ostensibly a burlesque upon a book of etiquette by John Skelton, called *My Book, or the Anatomy of Conduct*, but in reality they were a satire upon snobs and snobbishness, a subject to which Thackeray was almost morbidly addicted.

In 1837 Thackeray married Isabella, a daughter of Colonel Matthew Shawe. There were three daughters of the marriage, one of whom died in infancy, another became the wife of Leslie Stephen, and the third is the well-known writer Mrs. Anne Thackeray Ritchie. His married life was happy up to a certain point, when a cloud fell over his home owing to the failure of his wife's mind, and the severance which such a calamity necessarily brought about. This trial no doubt contributed largely to that habitual melancholy which underlay Thackeray's brightest sallies, and it possibly gave also a bitter note to much of his satire.

At about this time he joined the staff of *Punch*, and his writings went far towards making

the famous humorous and satirical weekly the successful institution it soon became. Shirley Brooks, who was later on one of its editors, said that it was a good day for himself, the journal, and the world that Thackeray found *Punch*. He wrote extensively for the journal, contributing sketches and burlesques, as well as satirical and humorous verses, many of which being illustrated by himself. A large number of these contributions were afterwards republished in book form, as, for instance, *The Book of Snobs* and *The Ballads of Policeman X*. Up to 1843 he had not appeared as a writer under his own name, but had used the pen-names of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, and earlier that of Mr. Fitz Booodle. It was not until the publication of the *Irish Sketch Book* that he dispensed with the thin cloak of anonymity which covered the authorship of his works, and then he only used his name in the dedication. During his connection with *Punch*, from 1843 to 1852, he produced an enormous quantity of burlesque literature and satire, much of it, to be sure, mere ephemeral journalism, but in almost every sketch or article he wrote there is some living passage, and the

best of his lighter work stands among the best work of its kind.

Thackeray was all this time serving his apprenticeship to the novelist's art. In the days of his contributions to *Fraser's Magazine* he had already made a step forward in the direction of the novel with that masterly series of fictitious confessions and memoirs beginning, in 1839, with *Catherine*, and culminating, in 1844, with the *Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*. Thackeray had gone back to the old masters for his models. Defoe and Fielding had set him a good example, and it is quite easy to trace in his earlier works the influence of the *Memoirs of a Cavalier* and *Jack Shepherd*, and even, in a milder form, *Moll Flanders*; but the finest of his stories of this period, *Barry Lyndon*, with its undercurrent of irony rippling the smooth surface of the diabolonian history, must have been inspired by Fielding's masterpiece of ironic realism, *Jonathan Wild*.

In 1847 Thackeray commenced publishing *Vanity Fair* in monthly parts, and this placed him immediately in the forefront of novelists. The parts were illustrated by himself. *Vanity Fair* was an attempt at the creation of a novel which

should be free from the popular weaknesses of the average piece of fashionable fiction. It was to be the fullest expression of that sense of reality which had made a satirist of Thackeray. His attitude towards the literary tastes of his period was much the same as that of Fielding towards those of his day; in fact, Thackeray was in the direct line of descent from the author of *Tom Jones*. His aim was to restore actuality to fiction. And *Vanity Fair* was as much a protest against sentimentalism and sham heroics as *Joseph Andrews*. But it was saved from the weakness of this last novel in that it did not begin as a burlesque. Thackeray was too conscious an artist for that, and his method of protest against unreality in the art of the novel was not to poke fun, but to create the reality as he conceived it, and so point a moral by personal example.

*Vanity Fair* was such an example; in this novel he shows that all heroines need not be paragons of virtue and amiability, and that heroes were not indispensable. Furthermore, he also reverts, as Dickens before him had done in *Pickwick*, to the true form of the novel, as a



narrative not dependent upon plot. *Vanity Fair* is a section of social life, and if every semblance of story were removed, it would still remain a thoroughly interesting novel. Thackeray, according to the lights of his time, did that which Ibsen has done more recently, and with greater freedom, because unhampered by the sentimentalism which is a characteristic of the English people. Ibsen strove to reveal human action as it is, without any deference to preconceived opinion or moral anticipation. Thackeray strove to make you feel about his novels much as Ibsen made you feel about his plays : that you were the witness of incidents in life whose actors were unconscious of your observation. But Thackeray could never make his characters feel that they were not under his eye. Ibsen almost achieves the absolute in his plays. His scenes, as Mr. William Archer has so well pointed out, are like what one might see going on inside a house if some one were to remove a wall.

Thackeray never achieved so absolute a realism. He never, try as he would, created a character which did not reflect in a marked manner his own prejudices and tastes. The

women of *Vanity Fair*, Amelia Osborne, Becky Sharp, and even that worldly old reprobate Miss Crawley, have a greater air of reality than the women of any novels up to that time ; and this reality was to be intensified in *Henry Esmond*, in the persons of Lady Castlewood and Beatrix. Yet each one gives the impression that she is under the author's instructions. That she is so good or so amiable because Thackeray liked her so ; that she is so wicked or so snobbish because Thackeray could see these vices more acutely because of his antipathy to them. Nevertheless, both the men and women of *Vanity Fair* are real and, with these reservations, convincing.

Thackeray wrote *Vanity Fair* whilst he was living in Young Street, Kensington, where he had gone in 1847 and where he lived until 1853, when he bought a house in Onslow Square. The success of *Vanity Fair* did not inspire him with full confidence in his earning powers as a writer, and in 1848 he tried to obtain an appointment as Assistant-Secretary at the General Post Office, but without success. He held convinced views upon the Civil Service and its relationship with literary workers, and considered that a pre-

ference in an appointment should always be given to those who were rendering their country such services as the creation of literature.

The next few years were a period of great activity. Thackeray never had the faculty of ready and continuous composition, he was a fitful worker and his inclinations were all in the direction of idleness. He could only bring himself to his pen with the greatest trouble, and his lifelong habit was never to do to-day a thing that can be put off till to-morrow. He was fully conscious of this failing, and nothing gave him keener feelings of remorse than the memory of time thus thrown away. Yet after each attack of remorse, and its resulting good resolutions, he would go and commit the same fault. Such an uncertainty of application filled him with constant fears as to his power of keeping up his income, and this added considerably to his natural melancholy which had been deepened by his wife's affliction. But above all his regrets, doubts, and self-reproaches, he was a bright and genial companion, a lovable father, and, although no great talker, a conversationalist of charm and wit.

In personal appearance Thackeray was a tall man, standing six feet four in height, and his flowing hair was prematurely grey ; his face was kind in expression, with a suggestion of critical sensitiveness, but this was saved from severity by the playfulness of his disposition, which pervaded his intellect and sparkled in his blue eyes. His forehead was broad, and his lips were full and wore a slight curve of disdain. The face would have been a beautiful one had it not been for the disfigured nose, which was broken when he was a boy at the Charterhouse School.

In spite of his idleness the amount of work accomplished by him was very great, as the long line of volumes standing to his name proves. His next great novel, *Pendennis*, was published in parts in 1849 and 1850.

In 1851 *The Kicklegurys on the Rhine* appeared, and, in the following year, his most earnest and carefully finished work, *Henry Esmond*, a novel which, although it did not create such enthusiasm as *Vanity Fair*, has been acclaimed as his supreme masterpiece, and so fastidious a critic as Walter Pater alludes to it as a perfect novel. This great book, apart from its fine studies of

character, its full-length portraits of Henry Esmond, Lady Castlewood, and her fascinating but heartless daughter Beatrix, is a noble picture of the period of Queen Anne. Thackeray has not only told his tale in the beautiful and stately English of that time, he has done more, he has revealed the very life and atmosphere of those times, with all their courtliness and grace, their ambition, their scholarship, and their weakness. Thackeray put work and thought into *Esmond*, and the results are magnificent. Nevertheless, his own faith in himself was in no wise deepened, as the following anecdote would indicate, although his reference to Esmond as to a living person would suggest that inwardly at least he had been moved by the reality of his creation. "I told Thackeray once," says Anthony Trollope,

that it was not only his best work, but so much the best that there was none second to it. "That was what I intended," he said, "but I have failed. Nobody reads it. After all, what does it matter?" he went on after a while. "If they like anything one ought to be satisfied. After all, Esmond was a prig." Then he laughed and changed the subject, not caring to dwell on thoughts painful to him.

During the time he was at work upon *Esmond* he was writing his famous series of studies of *The English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*; these were first delivered as lectures in both England and America, beginning in London at Willis's Rooms in 1851; and they were followed a little later by the brilliant series of satirical and realistic studies of the *Four Georges*. Thackeray was thoroughly at home in the interesting historical period covered by the lectures and *Esmond*, indeed, in spirit he was a child of that age, and his books are an embodiment and an interpretation of its life. His studies of the humorists and kings of the period show the same intimate knowledge of the time and the same discriminating choice as is shown in the picture of the people and manners of the period in *Esmond*. Thackeray had a humorist's appreciation of humorists, born of an inner knowledge of the faculty. Humour for him was an instrument of criticism, and the same light which helped him to reveal the essence of the great writers helped him to reveal the inner natures of the first four rulers of the Hanoverian dynasty.

"The humorous writer," he says,

professes to awaken and direct your love, your pity, your kindness,—your scorn for untruth, pretension, and imposture,—your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the unhappy. To the best of his means and ability he comments on all the ordinary actions and passions of life almost. He takes upon himself to be the week-day preacher, so to speak. Accordingly, as he finds, and speaks, and feels the truth best, we regard him, esteem him—sometimes love him.

In this passage Thackeray not only gives his own idea of humour and the function of the humorist, he interprets his own attitude towards life as a writer and critic.

The two series of lectures were a great success both in England and America, and Thackeray realised by them a considerable sum of money. His power as a lecturer was very limited. He had none of the dramatic ability which came so naturally to Charles Dickens, nor had he that equally important gift of laboriousness which made Dickens rehearse every single word and inflexion of the voice before facing his audience. Thackeray wrote his lectures with care and knowledge, and read them to the public in a straightforward plodding manner, as many



another lecturer has done before and since, depending almost entirely upon the matter rather than the manner of their delivery.

He published *The Newcomes* in 1855, and his last novel, *The Virginians*, began to appear in 1857, and ended in 1859; the first of these novels was a sequel to *Pendennis* and the last to *Esmond*. Whilst *The Newcomes* was appearing in 1857 he made another unsuccessful attempt to enter into the public service by standing in the Liberal interest for Oxford; but although he made a good fight and polled well he was defeated by a majority of 53. In 1859 he undertook what proved to be the last great work of his life, the editorship of the then new *Cornhill Magazine*. He continued the editorship up to April, 1862, and continued to write for the magazine up to his death. He made *The Cornhill Magazine* a success both from the financial and literary points of view, but this was probably due more to his prestige and good literary taste than to any of the usual qualities, method, assiduity, and so forth, which go to the making of a successful editor. He himself contributed in no small way to the success of

the magazine by printing some of his own works in its pages. In this way he published *The Adventures of Philip*, the *Roundabout Papers*, and he had started a new novel, *Denis Duval*, which was not completed owing to his death. Besides these attractive "features," he gathered around him most of the literary ability and genius of the time, and among much brilliant material he published articles, poems, and stories by such writers as Tennyson, Lord Houghton, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Augustus Sala, Mrs. Gaskell, Mary Howitt, Charles Lever, Frederick Locker, Laurence Oliphant, John Ruskin, Anthony Trollope, Adelaide Anne Proctor, and Matthew Arnold.

Thackeray had built himself a new house at Palace Green, and there he went to live in 1862. His health had not been excellent for some time, but there was nothing to cause any fear, although those who knew him intimately were aware of his constant sufferings from spasms left by a fever of many years before. But his friends were not prepared for the surprising suddenness of his death, which took

place at Palace Green on Christmas Eve, 1863, at the age of fifty-three years.

As a novelist William Makepeace Thackeray was, as we have seen, a realist whose view of things was coloured to some extent by his own prejudices. He was a social critic first and an entertaining writer last. But his criticism of society was by no means merely destructive, there was a positive side to his criticism as well as a negative, and after he had whipped the hypocrisies and pretensions of his age, he had a way of showing his readers the persons and qualities he most admired. His hatred of the snob was the keynote of his satire, and he pursued that gentleman and gentlewoman with tireless and relentless scorn, laughter, and invective. It was a hatred so consuming as in many ways to destroy the balance of his view of things. For after all, objectionable as the snob is, he is not so important as to warrant the expenditure of all the subtleties and thunders of a Thackeray in his extermination. It is like calling out the military to exterminate domestic mice. The snob will be always with us, and the wisest satirist will simply indicate his

presence, and at the same time make him pay for his existence by provoking our mirth. But if Thackeray hated the snob he loved the gentleman, not the hereditary gentleman, but the man in whom courtliness, sincerity, and honour are innate.

Thackeray was unsparing in his attack upon all the assumption and mean pride which belittle and falsify so much of human intercourse. With pen and pencil he fought tirelessly for frankness and honesty of manners, and for the creation of men and women, not of mere social automata. He preferred a man with habits he himself would have condemned, so long as these habits were a genuine expression of the man's nature, so long as he was acting from real human passion and not from the dictation of fashion or hypocrisy. This attitude of his towards reality is seen very clearly in his lectures on *The Four Georges*, where he is tolerant of so much because it was the expression of some real need, no matter how base, and where his hardest reflexions are reserved for shams and hypocrisies; his worst criticism of George IV is that the portly monarch was nothing but "a great simulacrum."

“His sire and grandsires were men,” he says.

One knows what they were like : what they would do in given circumstances : that on occasion they fought and demeaned themselves like tough good soldiers. They had friends whom they liked according to their natures ; enemies whom they hated fiercely ; passions, and actions, and individualities of their own. The sailor king who came after George was a man ; the Duke of York was a man, big, burly, loud, jolly, cursing, courageous. But this George, what was he ? I look through all his life, and recognise but a bow and a grin. I try and take him to pieces, and find silk stockings, padding, stays, a coat with frogs and a fur collar, a star and a blue ribbon, a pocket handkerchief prodigiously scented, one of Truefitt’s best nutty-brown wigs reeking with oil, a set of teeth and a huge black stock, under-waistcoats, more under-waistcoats, and then nothing.

Such a state of things as this, which may be accepted as a view of society through Thackeray’s eyes, was at the bottom of all his so-called cynicism. There was in reality very little of the cynic in Thackeray ; he was a satirist striving to give public expression to the unworthiness he saw about him. His nimble wit and full humour, his light, playful pen, were all made for such a task, and the very fact that he vexed

people proved that he often came near to the truth of things. He was not afraid, in an age of gushing sentiment and callow romanticism, to be a heretic. He recognised, with Fielding, that heroes were not perfect, but he went a step further and by recognising the other truth, that heroines also were not immaculate, he broadened the bounds of the novelist's art and of social discussion.

He knew, further, that heroes were often quite ordinary persons, like his own Captain Dobbin, and, further still, he knew that the adorable woman was not always the angel or the saint. So whilst Dickens was soothing the world with the immaculate and docile pictures of Kate Nickleby, Agnes Copperfield, and Esther Summerson, Thackeray was opening its eyes with Becky Sharp and Beatrix Castlewood. He had realised, as Robert Louis Stevenson did years afterwards, that the charming creature who eats next to nothing and plays ravishingly all day on the pianoforte, may be "a little devil after all." And because he said so he was called cynic, by those who entirely overlooked the other side of his medal. If he created a Becky Sharp in

*Vanity Fair*, he also created Amelia Osborn; and besides Beatrix, in *Esmond*, there was the beautiful study of Lady Castlewood.

But Thackeray is not beyond modern criticism as a realist, for, after the conscious realism of our own day, his pioneer work seems almost of a kin with what we should call idealism. And, indeed, this is quite true, for on the other side of his medal was the ideal. Thackeray was so much in earnest that he was always in danger of missing his point. He would look through green or rosy spectacles when he might have been using his own eyes. And just as he spent too much time in castigating the snob he showed a tendency to dwell overmuch upon the excellences of his men of honour, his Colonel Newcomes and his Harry Esmonds.

These, however, were small sins in the midst of so much of what is good. The novels of Thackeray are a vivid picture of English life in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They are narratives rather than romances, revealing the nature of their people and surroundings by the interpretation of character, rather than the working of a plot. Thackeray



was less dependent upon the mere story of his novels than any English novelist since Sterne. His novels are an historic panorama, a great canvas, which, had time and circumstances permitted, might have been continued illimitably, crowded with all the incident, movement, colour, and atmosphere of reality. This image is strengthened by the fact that his four great novels, the volumes upon which his claim upon the future rests, *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*, *Henry Esmond* and *The Virginians*, are not only joined in couples as sequels, but the inner life of the series is linked together by the Warrington family which appears in *Pendennis*, *Esmond*, and *The Virginians*.

Thackeray was a great artist, and he has bequeathed to literature some of its finest pictures in words. Much of his work is irregular, and bears all the evidence of the haste in which it was prepared, but in everything he wrote there is genius, shining through his wit and humour, his pathos, and his tenderness; and one of his works at least, *Henry Esmond*, is entirely free of all his faults. It is a work that is classical in its dignified

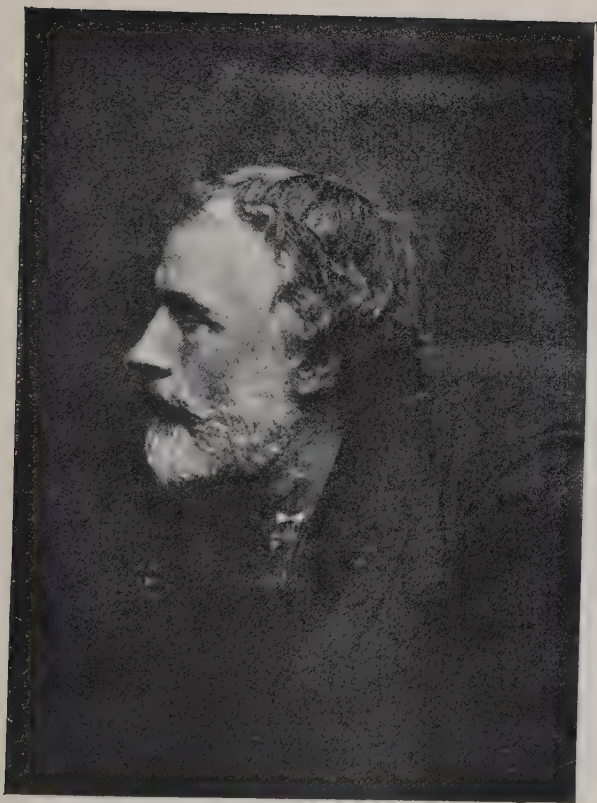
certainty of form and expression, full of fine action and wonderfully modelled characters, culminating in the superb creation of Esmond himself. This noble book shows more insight into character and a finer psychologic sense than any novel before it. And if William Makepeace Thackeray had produced no other work, it would have been sufficient in itself to place him among the greatest writers.

## GEORGE MEREDITH

**I**F we except the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and some of those of Bulwer-Lytton, we shall find that in most instances the great English novels have been novels with a purpose. Scott in all his fictions, and Lytton in his historical novels, were not novelists in the exclusive sense. They were writers of romantic tales who used the novel form. The early typical novelists were social critics, men with axes to grind. They did not write primarily to amuse, but to inform, to interpret, and to correct. Interest, vividness, inevitability were incidentals, in a large measure forced upon them by the demands of art and the public. People like to be instructed, they will even stand being reproved, but they rightly insist upon both information and criticism being interesting. So the novel, which sprang out of the moral fervour of the age of Addison, and assumed form at the hands of writers like

Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Laurence Sterne, became interesting and popular because of the glamour it is in the power of art to throw over ideas and things.

George Meredith represents to a very considerable extent the consummation and full expression of the tradition of the English novel, but with a difference. Such a consummation does not mean that the novel will die out or continue repeating in varying forms the accomplishment of the old masters, but that it will move to another realm of consciousness, and engage itself with another set of ideas. In the past the English novel has been moral, emotional, and sentimental, and to this extent perfectly in key with the characteristics of the nation. With Meredith a change comes about. He adopts the machinery of the great novelists, and drives it by a new power. Where they used moral fervour, he uses philosophy; where they allowed emotion to dictate terms, he insists upon the intellect being arbiter; where they wept and invoked the Fates, he smiles and appeals to reason, and just as the moral realism of Fielding was a protest against the sentimentalism of



GEORGE MEREDITH

*After a photograph by Frederick Hollyer*



Richardson, so the philosophic comedy of Meredith is a protest against the emotional attitude of the popular novel of his time. All the great novelists before him have been popular writers: their novels have in every instance met with sudden and amazing success. Meredith is the first great novelist to have been unpopular. His novels had become classics before they were known to the general public.

The consummation of the English novel in Meredith is the more marked because in him it has become a fully conscious and responsible art-form. The novels of Meredith represent the adulthood of the novel. They do not seek to create pleasant feeling, but intelligent consideration. Up to his time the novel had always played down to that point in the intelligence of the reader which made least resistance. George Meredith never attempts this method: he always insists upon his reader bracing himself for an intellectual contest. His avowed purpose is to arouse the mind, to awaken the imagination. He has never depended upon broad effects or detailed exposition, but has



sought to reveal the motives and ideas behind the ways of men in vivid phrase and terse pictorial utterance. He has put his theory into a memorable passage in *Diana of the Crossways* :—

The art of the pen (we write on darkness) is to rouse the inward vision, instead of labouring with a drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye ; because our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description. That is why the poets, who spring imagination with a word or a phrase, paint lasting pictures. The Shakespearean, the Dantesque, are in a line, two at most.

Few novelists have deviated less from a set purpose. The fleeting intelligence of humanity has ever been before the author of *The Egoist*, and throughout his long life, returning popular indifference with indifference, he has not ceased to interpret society and its relationship with the whole of life by springing the imagination with word and phrase.

George Meredith was born in Hampshire on the 12th of February, 1828. He is of Irish and Welsh descent. As a boy he was sent to a Moravian school at Neuwied in Germany, where he remained till the age of fifteen, returning to

England to read for the law. The law, however, was soon abandoned for literature, for in early manhood we find him actively engaged in journalism. His first poem was published in *Chambers's Journal* for July the 7th, 1849. It was called *Chillianwallah* and celebrates, with correctness but little distinction, the battle at that place, then a topical matter. The affray will be remembered as that in which the Sikhs killed and wounded some 2400 British who were under the leadership of Lord Gough. Two years later, in 1851, Meredith published his first book, a volume of poems. The slender volume was issued by Charles Ollier, who, with his brother and under the title of C. and J. Ollier, had published the poems of Keats, and who had been associated with Shelley, Lamb, Coleridge, and Leigh Hunt. The young poet took himself seriously, and had then evidently made up his mind to devote his life to the art of the pen, for in a letter to Ollier, in reply to an appreciation of his work, he speaks with fortitude of critical injustice and slight, and with confidence that the selection of his poems "was but the vanguard of better work to come."

The letter concludes with a passage in which he expresses the belief that the volume would appeal "to those who look with encouragement upon such earnest students of nature, who are determined to persevere until they obtain the wisdom, and inspiration, and self-possession of the poet."

His career as a journalist covered with some irregularity about twenty years. He was first on the staff of the *Ipswich Journal*, and, later, contributed to *Once a Week*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the *Morning Post*, acting as correspondent for the latter paper during the Austro-Italian War of 1866, when he lived for a time at Venice. In 1867 he undertook the editorship of the *Fortnightly Review* during the time his friend, Mr. John Morley, was away in America. By far the greater part of his journalism was confined to poetry and the publication of his novels in serial form. He regularly contributed poems to *Once a Week*, and in the same magazine appeared *Evan Harrington*, in 1861. *Once a Week* was published by Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, and apart from its fame as the repository of some of the finest wood-engravings of the sixties, it

will always be notable in the annals of journalism as one of the earliest popular illustrated magazines. There was a high standard in its contributions, and it numbered among its contributors most of the best writers of the day, including Tennyson, Swinburne, Harriet Martineau, Christina Rossetti, Charles Knight, Tom Taylor, George Henry Lewes, and Charles Reade, whose *Cloister and the Hearth* ran through its pages as a serial under the title of *A Good Fight*. Besides these writers, its illustrators were equally brilliant, John Leech, Tenniel, Millais, Hablot K. Browne, Charles Keene, and others being on its regular staff. It is probable that in the pages of *Once a Week* Meredith came before a wider circle of readers than at any time up to the issue of *Diana of the Crossways*.

It has been the aim of George Meredith throughout his long life to approach the public only through his works. The life and personality of no prominent living writer is so little known. In following the high purpose of his art he has maintained the privacy of a recluse so far as the general public are concerned, but at the same time he has made this consistent with

a lively concern for all the vital happenings in the world of literature, politics, and ideas. The details of his private life are very meagre. Of his early struggles we know nothing—except that he had struggles; and there is a legend, with possibly a little basis in fact, which illustrates the determination of the man, telling how, in the early days, he invested his last money in a sack of oatmeal, and retired to his cottage to work, living upon the simple contents of the sack until the novel in hand was finished.

One of his earliest friendships was with Thomas Love Peacock, the novelist, author of *Nightmare Abbey*, *Headlong Hall*, and *Gryll Grange*, one of whose daughters, Mary Ellen, widow of Lieutenant Nicholls, he married in 1849. At this time he occupied a cottage at Weybridge, in Surrey, his father-in-law, to whom he dedicated his first volume of poems, living close by, at Lower Halliford, near Shepperton. He has been twice married; his second wife died on September the 15th, 1885, and is buried near to his present home at Box Hill. Meredith, since manhood, has never lacked friendship

with his peers, and before he was known to more than the most exclusive followers of literature, he was on friendly terms with the members and associates of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a connection which had some effect on his early poems, as may be seen from some of his contributions to *Once a Week*. He was a visitor at the house of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in Chatham Place, and after the tragic death of the poet-painter's wife, he joined him in a short-lived scheme for a co-operate household. Rossetti took a lease of Tudor House, No. 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, in the days when Chelsea was a picturesque and quiet neighbourhood ; the large old house stood pleasantly on the banks of the Thames, with no embankment between its enclosed garden and the water. The house was too large for a person of Rossetti's requirements, so it was decided that a few kindred spirits should jointly occupy it, living in their own separate rooms, and meeting at the common dining-table in the evenings. So it came about that, in 1862, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Swinburne, William Michael Rossetti, and George Meredith, entered into residence, with the idea,

says Mr. A. C. Benson, of living "a kind of collegiate life." Everything had been taken into account save the diverse and assertive temperaments of the members of the household, and on this rock the experiment went to pieces, Meredith being the first to break with the arrangement.

Up to the time of the Chelsea experiment he had published, besides his first volume of poems, his first prose work, the humorous, delightfully imaginative fantasy *The Shaving of Shagpat: An Arabian Entertainment*, in 1855; *Farina: A Legend of Cologne*, his first and slightest novel, the result of his boyish impressions of Germany, and full of a quaint fantasy and happy, poetic view of life, in 1857; *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, the first of the genuinely Meredithian novels, in 1859. *Evan Harrington* ran through *Once a Week* in 1860, and appeared in book form in the following year. The second volume of poems, called *Modern Love, and Poems of the English Roadside*, appeared in 1862, whilst he was living at Chelsea. Side by side with the appearance of his novels came his poems, each growing in power and intensity, until they attained that excellence which places their creator among the



eminent novelists and poets of his land. It is interesting to note that the poetic side of his art, which first engaged his pen, was the first to attain supremacy. Even *The Shaving of Shagpat* and *Farina*, although both written in prose, are obviously the work of a poet; and it is more than probable that future ages will read *Richard Feverel* for those passages of impassioned prose, passages like the famous chapter "A Diversion played on a Penny Whistle," and that exquisite idyll called "Ferdinand and Miranda," which come so near to poetry. But besides the influence of the poet in the prose of the novelist, there is a maturity of thought and expression in *Modern Love*, not, up to the time of its publication, found in any of his novels.

In 1864 *Emilia in England* (afterwards renamed *Sandra Belloni*) appeared, and two years later came its sequel *Vittoria*, which originally ran through the pages of the *Fortnightly Review*. *Vittoria* is Meredith's one novel of physical action. It is based upon his experiences of the Austro-Italian war, and celebrates the struggle of Northern Italy against Austria. Between the publication of these two masterly novels he

wrote and issued *Rhoda Fleming*, the most straightforward and least analytical of all his novels. *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* appeared as a serial in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1871, where it was illustrated by George du Maurier. This was the first of his novels to make anything like a popular success, for upon its publication in three volumes, after its appearance in the *Cornhill*, two editions were sold in quick succession. His political novel, *Beauchamp's Career*, appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* during 1874 and 1875, and was issued as a volume at the end of the latter year. Then, after another lapse of four years, came his masterpiece, *The Egoist*, the most characteristic of all his novels, and one which to-day stands unchallenged in the front rank of English novels, alongside of *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*, *David Copperfield*, and *Vanity Fair*.

The time between the publication of *Beauchamp's Career* and *The Egoist* was not entirely devoted to the production of his masterpiece, for, strange to say, it was during this period that he made those two digressions from the even course of his literary way which are still unique in his career ;

and, stranger still, these digressions produced results which in themselves are no less important than such high products of his genius as *Love in the Valley*, *The Shaving of Shagpat*, and *The Egoist* itself. For their fruits are nothing less than his three short stories and his one and only separate essay in criticism. The last is important in three respects. In the first place, the essay *On the Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit* is one of the most subtle, exhaustive, and illuminating pieces of philosophic criticism in the language, sufficient in itself to place Meredith among the critics. Secondly, it is in reality not only a commentary upon his own work, but with the brilliant first chapters to *The Egoist* and *Diana of the Crossways*, as well as the pronouncements of the philosopher in *Sandra Belloni*, it forms one of the keys to his point of view and aim. And thirdly, it was the occasion of his only appearance as a public lecturer, for the essay on *The Idea of Comedy* was first delivered orally at the London Institute on the 1st of February, 1877. In the following April it appeared in the *New Quarterly Magazine*, but it was not issued as a book until 1897. Meredith has only

written three short stories, or four if we include *Farina*, his first novel.

As a matter of fact all four are fundamentally novels. They are novels in a highly concentrated form, and have very little in common with the short story proper. The tragic and comic themes of these little novels have all the qualities of his larger works reduced to their least common measure. They are the apposite and gem-like counterparts of the longer novels. At the same time they are by no means impressionist sketches, on the contrary, they are crowded with detail and incident—but where *Sandra Belloni* and *Harry Richmond* are life-size portraits, *The Tale of Chloe* and *The House on the Beach* are miniatures. The same profundity and subtlety of thought appears, the same masterly use of words and sense of the inevitable, reduced in scale with the most exquisite delicacy and proportion. Of the three stories *The House on the Beach* came first, then *The Case of General Ople* and *Lady Camper* and *The Tale of Chloe*. Like *The Idea of Comedy*, they all appeared originally in the *New Quarterly Magazine*, the first two in January and July, 1877, and the

last in July, 1879. Nothing reveals the genius of Meredith so clearly as the fact that these three tales and the essay, each in their way perfect expressions of the art they represent, should have been produced in quick succession in, as it were, the spare time of the creation of a masterpiece like *The Egoist*.

His next novel was *The Tragic Comedians*, published first as a serial in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1880, and afterwards in two volumes. Like *Vittoria*, *The Tragic Comedians* is based upon recent history. It is the story of Ferdinand Lassalle, the brilliant and picturesque socialist who at one time might have considerably altered the destinies of Germany, and Helene von Dönniges. Meredith sees the tragedy of Lassalle as a fantastic study, and he tells the story in an almost matter-of-fact way, without additions and with little invention. The people of the tale "are real creatures, exquisitely fantastical, strangely exposed to the world by a lurid catastrophe," but in Meredith's imaginative realism they stand revealed, interpreted, as in a magic crystal. In 1883 the *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* appeared,

and in 1885 *Diana of the Crossways*. With this novel Meredith leapt into something very like popularity, but, ironically enough, this was not due to any recognition of the novelist's genius on the part of the public, but to the breath of scandal associated with the story. Like so many of his novels it first appeared in the *Fortnightly*, in 1884, and there began to arouse curiosity, which was so keen in the following year, when it was issued in three volumes, that three editions were demanded. The heroine, Diana Warwick, like the central figures in *The Tragic Comedians*, is drawn from life. Her story is founded upon that of the beautiful and gifted grand-daughter of Sheridan, Caroline Norton, who was known in her day as a poet and novelist. She was unhappy in her married life, and her husband brought an action for divorce against her (which was unsuccessful) in connection with Lord Melbourne, who was then Prime Minister. She was also accused of betraying a Cabinet secret to *The Times*, which was confided to her by Sidney Herbert, one of her intimate friends and admirers, and by thus prematurely disclosing Sir

Robert Peel's determination to support the repeal of the Corn Laws, she brought about a serious Cabinet crisis. After the publication of *Diana of the Crossways*, however, this charge was examined and proved groundless, and succeeding editions of the novel appeared with the following note : " A lady of distinction for wit and beauty, the daughter of an illustrious Irish house, came under the shadow of a calumny. It has lately been examined and exposed as baseless. The story of *Diana of the Crossways* is to be read as fiction."

Another volume of poems and ballads appeared in 1887, and then came *One of our Conquerors*, the novel which contains above all the others such a superabundance of those compressions of thought, epigrams, and metaphors, especially in its initial chapters, that it merits the term obscure, which has been so loosely and so wrongfully used in reference to the whole of Meredith's works. *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* appeared serially in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in 1894, and *The Amazing Marriage*, his last novel, was published in 1896. Neither of these novels bear any of those difficulties of style so obvious



in *One of our Conquerors*. Meredith returns to that lucidity which characterises *Diana of the Crossways* and *The Egoist*, and these latest works are capable of holding their own with any of their predecessors.

The greater part of his work has been done at Flint Cottage, Box Hill, near Dorking, Surrey, where Meredith has lived these many years. His house is a simple two-storied dwelling-place resting in its own garden at the foot of a pine-clad hill, and looking out upon Box Hill and the Woods of Westermmain. In the grounds of the house, upon a pleasant grassy slope overshadowed by the pine wood, there is a simple brown-red Swiss chalet. This is the novelist's workshop, and here in the living stillness of nature, in the heart of the beautiful county he loves so well, he has wrought intellect and imagination into enduring literature. It is to this retreat that he refers in *The Thrush in February* :—

My study, flanked with ivied fir  
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,  
Perched over yew and juniper,  
He neighbours, piping to his world :—



THE CHALET IN THE GROUNDS OF FLINT COTTAGE WHERE  
MEREDITH WROTE MANY OF HIS GREATEST NOVELS



FLINT COTTAGE, BOX HILL. THE HOME OF GEORGE MEREDITH



The wooded pathways dank on brown,  
The branches on grey cloud a web,  
The long green roller of the down,  
An image of the deluge-ebb :—

And, farther, they may bear along  
The stream beneath the poplar row,  
By fits, like welling rocks, the song  
Spouts of a blushful Spring in flow.

It is a strange thing that in Meredith we have at once one of the most civilised of novelists and most natural of philosophers and men ; one who, more than any other master of the novel, has dealt with human life in its most artificial age, and in the midst of the most complex society known to man, and one who is the poet and seer of a new and profound view of nature. In an interview with Mr. Henry W. Nevinson, he said that Pan had always been very close to him. That admission, not necessary to those with only the slightest acquaintance with his works, reveals the man. The whole of his life is in key with it ; he has lived in the open air amidst the mysteries and sanities of Nature, and these have sunk deep into his character. There is something hieratic, yet free, in his approach to Nature.

Like Walt Whitman, whom he resembles in many ways, he speaks as one having authority, as an initiate. He has looked without fear into the face of Pan, and realised a divine ordering of things in the cruelty, the chaos, and the tumble of life. This large pantheism of his is chiefly revealed in his poems, but it would not be easy to say how much of the charm of his novels is due to the fact of his having introduced Pan to the drawing-rooms.

Meredith has consciously and joyfully lived with nature, and, in all accounts of his personality, stress is laid upon his unfailing delight in swinging walks in all weathers over the hills and commons, and through the woods and valleys of Surrey. What he has sung of his own Melampus is equally true of himself :—

For him the woods were a home and gave him the key

Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers.

The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we

To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours :

And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined

Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows

In them, in us, from the source by man unattained

Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose.

The philosophy of Meredith is contained in

such a verse as this. His attitude towards life is that of one who looks upon the world and sees that it is good. He recognises that spiritual and material things are not two but one, each derived from the great Mother Earth. God is not identified with a separate being, nor yet with the spirit of all things, but with the beneficent and generous impulses of life. These exist in the spirit of the Earth Mother, and it is by communion with her that man may reach God. "She can lead us, only she, unto God's footstool." Earth, moreover, is Heaven. There is no other place of bliss, and the hope of man lies not in renunciation of Earth. "We do not get to Heaven by renouncing the Mother we spring from," but in a rational and intelligent use of her gifts, and in the final belief that in so far as there are secrets, she withholds them from us for a purpose, and reveals them to us when our love for her has stood the test of her mystery and her power.

The time will come [he says] for the mind of man to see the veritable God. Nature goes on her way, unfolding, improving, always pushing us higher; and I do not believe that this great process continues

without some spiritual purpose, some spiritual force that drives it on. Change is full of hope. A friend of mine was lamenting over the sadness of Autumn. "Are you sad when you change your coat?" I asked him.

In the face of the mystery of death he is equally sanguine. He looks upon fearlessness of death as essential to manliness, and deprecates anything that increases this fear. In the interview with Mr. Nevinson, from which the foregoing extract is taken, he says :—

No one should consider death or think of it as worse than going from one room into another. The greatest of political writers has said, "Despise your life, and you are master of the lives of others." Philosophy would say, "Conquer the fear of death, and you are put into possession of your life." I was a very timid and sensitive boy. I was frightened of everything; I could not endure to be left alone. But when I came to be eighteen I looked round the world (as far as a youth of eighteen can look) and determined not to be afraid again. Since then I have had no fear of death. Every night when I go to bed I know I may not rise from it. That is nothing to me. I hope I shall die with a good laugh, like the old Frenchwoman. The curé came wailing to her about her salvation and things like that, and she told him her best improper story, and died. The God of



Nature and human nature does not dislike humour, you may be sure, and would rather hear it in extremity than the formless official drone. Let us believe in a hearty God—one to love more than to fear.

Such a robust faith as this is behind all the novels of George Meredith. Among English novelists he stands with Henry Fielding in his frank and philosophic acceptance of human nature. He has the same faith in the underlying beneficence of impulse, and so long as actions are performed with sincerity and courage he has no fear for men. But to the robust humour and philosophy of Fielding, Meredith has added a subtlety of thought, a penetration into the motives of action, and a delicacy of wit and expression, which are not only peculiar to our own day, but almost peculiar to his novels. The difference between his novels and the novels of his predecessors in the art is not so much a difference in matter as a difference in mind. The earlier novelists, as we have seen, had purposes other than writing entertaining stories. But in every case their purpose has been confined to conduct and human conditions. They have either been moralists, like Richardson

and Fielding, or reformers, like Disraeli and Dickens. Meredith is also concerned about such things, but his concern extends beyond these externals into the mind. His aim is not so much to be a mentor of conduct or a dictator of reform as a leader of thought. That is why his novels have failed in arousing anything like widespread popular interest. They are not written for people who only use the novel as a pass-time. Their object and tendency is to make men think a little beyond their ordinary mental routine, to see a little deeper into the ways of their kind than has been habitual with them.

The mental effort demanded by such fictions has stood in the light of their popularity far more than any alleged obscurity of style. To such an extent has this been so, that there is no little justice in the novelist's reflection in his old age that the English people know nothing about him. He further alludes to "something anti-pathetic" between himself and the public. This is not far to seek. Meredith has not only woven into the novel an intellectual element hitherto confined to philosophic essay, a thing itself quite

sufficient to scare away the majority of novel readers, but in addition to this he has set himself the task of analysing and holding up to laughter the dearest of all the Englishman's characteristics—his sentimentalism.

The novels of Meredith in their entirety are a criticism of sentimentalism in the spirit of comedy, the comedy that "watches over sentimentalism with a birch-rod." The "Prelude" to *The Egoist* might well serve as a prelude to all his novels. In its compact and thought-freighted sentences he reveals his purpose.

Comedy [he says] is a game played to throw reflections upon social life, and it deals with human nature in the drawing-room of civilized men and women, where we have no dust of the struggling outer-world, no mire, no violent crashes, to make the correctness of the representation convincing. Credulity is not moved through the impressionable senses; nor have we recourse to the small circular glow of the watchmaker's eye to raise in bright relief minutest grains of evidence for the routing of incredulity. The comic spirit conceives a definite situation for a number of characters, and rejects all accessories in the exclusive pursuit of them and their speech. For, being a spirit, he hunts the spirit of men; vision and ardour constitute his merit: he has

not a thought of persuading you to believe him. Follow and you will see.

It is in their revelation of the ways of men by means of this spirit of comedy that Meredith's novels must ultimately stand or fall. He has seen the gardener Time in "our fat England" playing "all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life," and he has sought to note what he has seen. Particularly has he observed love under civilisation reacting upon itself and losing its freshness and courage in sentimentalism, and this he makes his special province. In all his novels, but more especially in *Sandra Belloni*, *The Tragic Comedians*, and *The Egoist*, he interprets this theme—showing his reader in bright flashes of wit the sentimentalist "accumulating images and living sensations till such time as they assume a form of vitality, and hurry him headlong."

— The method of Meredith is to condense ideas and pictures of life which usually find expression in long periods or even volumes into sentences and phrases. No English writer has his faculty of compression, yet, to the uninitiated, this has been of small use to him, for along with this gift he

has another gift—that of metaphor, which enables him to see every thought and idea in numerous images, each of which he uses. The result of this is, that what might have been compression becomes a new kind of diffuseness, a kaleidoscopic diffuseness in which every idea is revealed many times from a different point of view. This variety, although delightful enough to true Meredithians, the “acute and honourable minority,” cannot but be a source of bewilderment to the casual reader.

But his art does not end in phrase-making. No English novelist has given us a finer gallery of portraits. His people live in the memory like the people of Dickens. At the same time they live by a kind of supernaturalness, rather than by any record of the peculiar or the freakish. Meredith's great characters are generally studies of normal people. They live in the careful artistry of their delineator and the clear light thrown upon them and their motives by a sane and far-seeing philosopher. Although the panorama of his novels moves amidst civilised conditions, their background is always the wild undercurrent of life. No novelist reveals the

essential nature of man so clearly. Meredith is a psychologist with all the instincts of the naturalist, and not least among his achievements is the fact that he has introduced the cosmos into narrative fiction. Readers of his novels feel that man is not a thing apart from the rest of nature, and that, in spite of his artificiality, his houses, his science, his self-consciousness or prejudice, he is a link in the great universal scheme—

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,  
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

But neither does the value of Meredith's novels end in their high philosophic purpose: it only begins there. For after their serious aim has been realised their far-stretching delight as literature remains. Here is life revealed with a magic pen, from its morning in the fresh eagerness of the loves of Richard Feverel and Lucy Desborough, through the high passionate noontide of *Sandra Belloni*, to the calm evening of love in the serene and contained affections of Everard Romfrey or of Mr. Redworth. Wit sparkles on every page of his books and every sentence is full of wisdom. He has humour and fantasy.

laughing around the characters of Mr. Pericles, Master Gammon, Mrs. Chump, the Great Mel, the incomparable Berry, the gigantesque Carlylean figure of Shrapnel, and the romantic conception of Richmond-Roy. Pathos also and tragedy move through his pages, but generally revealed through comedy, or in a flash like the "I'm going to hit you sharp, sir," of the man who brought the news of Nevil Beauchamp's death to Dr. Shrapnel ; or the brief desolate picture of Lord Romfrey and the mother of "the boy Commander Beauchamp drowned to save."

"She's the mother, my lord," several explained to him.

"Mother of what?"

"My boy," the woman cried, and dragged the urchin to Lord Romfrey's feet cleaning her boy's face with her apron.

"It's the boy Commander Beauchamp drowned to save," said a man.

Again, Meredith is revealed in his great comic figures, in those characters it was the aim of his life to portray—Sir Willoughby Patterne, Wilfrid Pole, Evan Harrington, Harry Richmond, and those other and more restful types,

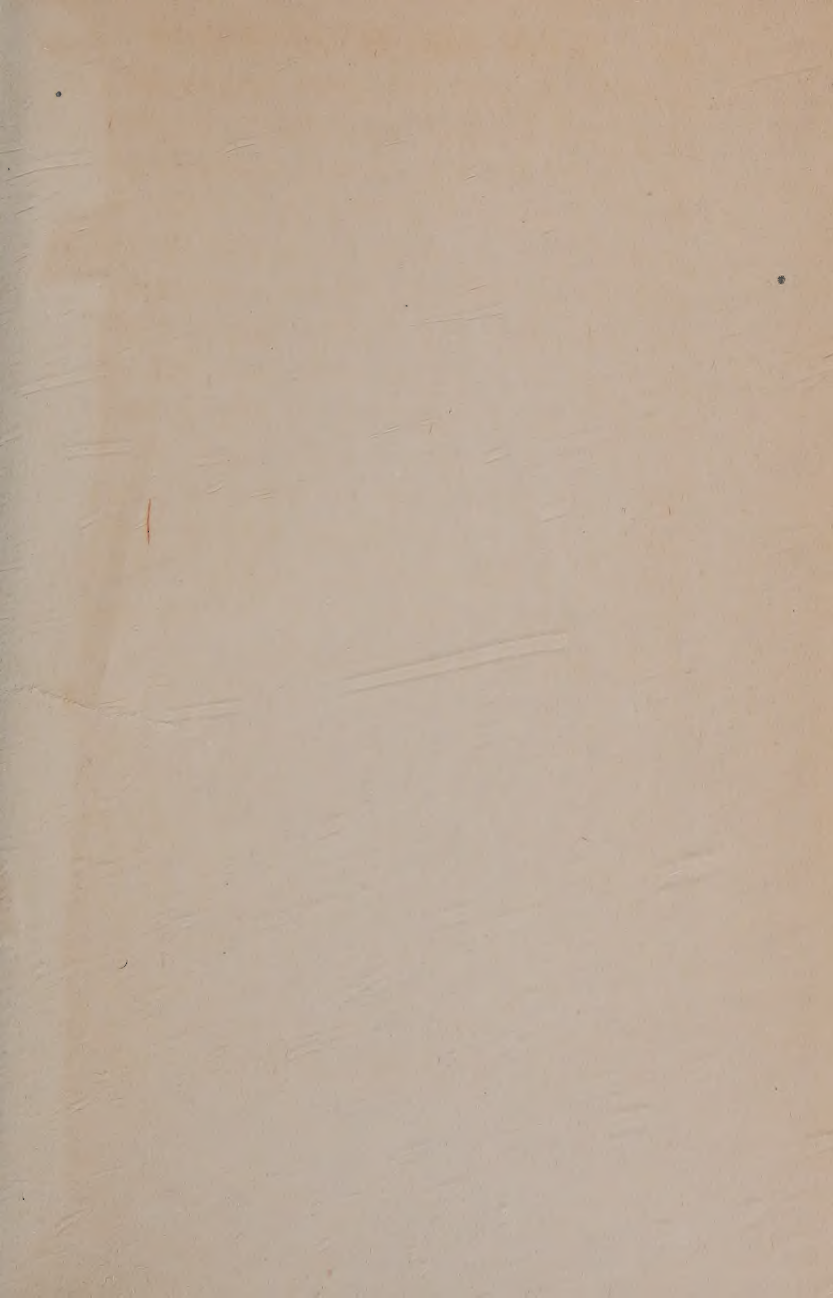


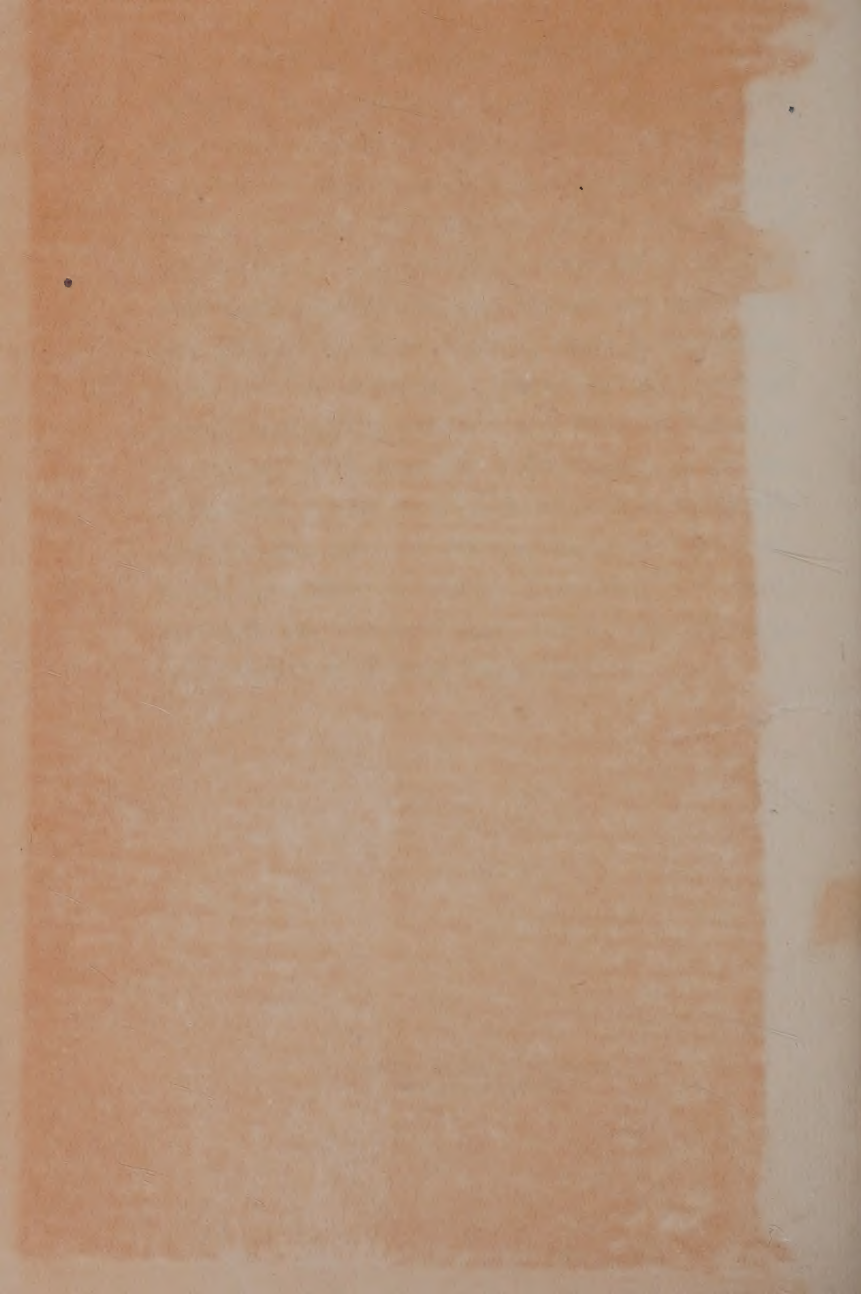
who seem to have his special love, men like Everard Romfrey, Vernon Whitford, Redworth, and Young Crossjay. In the revelation of the character of women Meredith is even greater still; he has an amazing insight into the feminine temperament and a lasting sympathy with woman's cause. No writer in the English language has created a brighter or more vivid gallery of portraits of women, and only the very greatest stand with him. Meredith is not merely chivalrous, he is companionable. Like his own Redworth he gives the impression of that rare quality—capacity of friendship with women. He knows their faults and peculiarities, just as he knows the faults and peculiarities of men, but he knows their sanity also; and although he does not shut his eyes to anything, there is, taken altogether, something wholesome, sincere, and subtly wise about his women. Whether it is the splendid Mrs. Berry, the garrulous, common-sense nurse of Lucy Desborough, equal, if not superior, to the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, or the worldly wisdom of the Countess de Saldar, it is all the same—a power deep in its intuitiveness and right in its strength. Perhaps

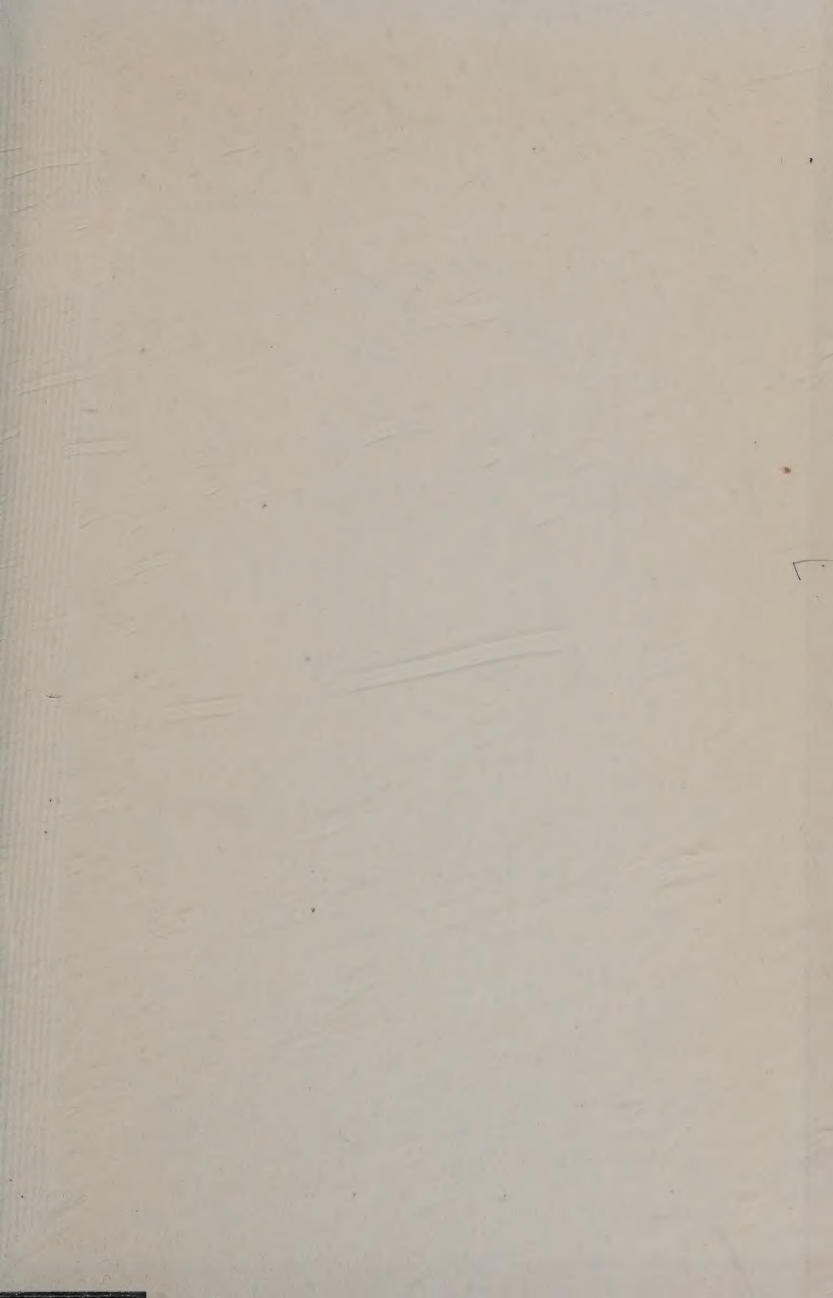
the most delightful of all memories of Meredith is that of his great company of noble, fascinating, passionate, scheming, and gentle women—Sandra Belloni, Renée, Lucy Desborough, Rhoda and Dahlia Fleming, Diana Warwick, Rose Jocelyn, Rosamund Culling, Cecilia Halkett, Clara Middleton, the sisters Pole, and many more, round whom scintillates the brightest wit, and from whom comes the ripest wisdom of the philosopher-novelist.

His attitude towards life is one of happy balance. With him ripeness is all, no need for rushing ahead in unreasoning abandonment, nor lagging behind in hopeless stagnation—these last are fair matter for the comic muse which arouses “thoughtful laughter.” This laughter of Comedy is the great corrective of social foibles : it is based upon the belief that our civilisation is founded in common sense, and that there is a spirit overhead, the Spirit of Eternal Progress, luminous and watchful of the purpose and destiny of life. This spirit is indeed Comedy itself. “It has the sage’s brows, and the sunny malice of a faun lurks at the corners of the half-closed lids drawn in an idle wariness of half tension.” It is not,

however, engaged with man's future, but with his present condition upon earth. Its one concern is for the honesty and shapeliness of men in the present. Whenever they "wax out of proportion ; . . . whenever they are at variance with their professions, and violate the unwritten but perceptible laws binding them in consideration one to another ; whenever they offend sound reason, fair justice ; are false in humility or ruined with conceit, individually, or in the bulk—the Spirit overhead will look humanely malign, and cast an oblique light on them, followed by volleys of silvery laughter." "That," he concludes, "is the Comic Spirit," and that also is the spirit of George Meredith.









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